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South London Somali ethnicities in superdiversity

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South London Somali ethnicities in superdiversity

Stephen Mun Choong Wong

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School of Social Science and Public Policy

Department of Language, Discourse and Communication

Abstract

This thesis examines what the notion of Somali ethnicity might mean in a modern urban context in the UK. In a departure from essentialist notions of ethnicity, it offers an account of multiple ways in which Somali ethnicities might be understood, by focusing closely on ten people of Somali descent (three adults and seven young people) at a local community centre in South London. The thesis develops an ethnographically informed analysis, drawing on observational field notes, together with recordings of naturally occurring speech events and of informal conversational interviews. It argues that interpretations and understandings of Somali ethnicities are inextricably linked to the mundane realities of place and locale – in this case a teeming multi-ethnic, superdiverse context in South London. In conditions of superdiversity there are few certainties about the link between specific ethnic labels and the actual lives of individuals existing under these labels. In this research an account is given of the significant differences in the biographical trajectories and diaspora connections of a range of individuals who all refer to themselves as Somalis. This study shows how people claiming Somali ethnicity manage, without crisis, the tensions arising from the encounter between claimed ‘traditional’ practices and the demands of urban modernity and late modernity in contemporary London. These tensions arise, for example, in relation to ‘traditional’ discourses and practices concerning kinship, clan, religion and gender. Finally, the thesis shows how, in a specific highly multi-ethnic local environment, Somalis have to both compete and cooperatively co-exist with others living under other ethnic labels. In these circumstances their Somali ethnic solidarity can often be indirectly signalled; for instance, through their routine communicative habits and the low-key unconscious assumptions they share in their everyday interactions.

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Introduction

I became interested in writing a thesis about the nature of Somali ethnicities as a result of my experiences of engaging with a group of people of Somali descent in London. In 2008, I enrolled on a MA in TESOL programme at a London university. By attending the lectures during this course, I became close friends with two colleagues of Somali descent named Jaffar and Asad. Our friendship was cultivated through repeated interactions during our encounters in lectures, post session discussions and social events. One of the core modules of the MA programme required students to design, teach and reflect on the efficacy of a set of teaching materials as part of its assessment. As an aspiring teacher without teaching experience, I shared my concerns with Jaffar about my ability to submit my paper to pass the course. Jaffar kindly offered to contact his cousin who operated a Somali supplementary school in South London. Jaffar's cousin immediately offered me work as a volunteer English teacher at his school. This particular school offered Science and English classes for Somali schoolchildren, and English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) for adults. Tucked away behind a row of shops on the high street and comprising three modest sized classrooms, the community school is a tight space with many students. These classrooms often cater to three different groups of students concurrently during the homework club sessions and the ability to amplify one's voice is certainly one of the requirements of being a successful teacher here. From September 2009 to January 2011, I taught ESOL to groups of young Somali adults aged between 18 to 30 years old. In 2009, I found out that while all the participants in my class self-identify as Somalis, they do not share similar migration histories to the UK. As a reflection of their diverse biographical trajectories, some of my students speak Somali, English, Dutch and Arabic while others speak a combination of Somali, Swedish, English and Swahili. There were 18 students officially enrolled in this class but only 10 of them regularly attend the scheduled sessions twice a week. These students' language behaviour were fascinating as their demeanour and utterances often seemed to be a convergence of Somali traditional cultural practices and the linguistic practices of a quite different geographical and societal space. Second, essential to this study is my interest in ethnic identifications. This interest was developed from my own experiences of being classed as an ethnic minority in the countries that I lived. I was born in Malaysia to 2nd generation Chinese immigrant parents where I lived for the initial 20 years of my life. There, I was labelled a non-native Malaysian due to my ancestral heritage. When I lived in the USA as a student

and later, as an employee of a financial institution, I was classed as a legal alien while in the UK, I am categorised as a member of an ethnic minority group. My cumulative experiences of being classified as belonging to a minority group or as an outsider in the countries in my personal biographical trajectory forms the basis of my interest in investigating the question of ethnic positionings.

As I immersed my presence in the Somali school as a teacher and friend to a group of participants, I became interested in the ways this group of people who possess diverse biographical trajectories position themselves as ‘Somalis’ in contemporary Southeast London. From my repeated encounters this group of people who I refer to as South London Somalis (SLS), I discovered that there isn’t such a thing as an ‘absolute’ nature of Somali ethnicity in the UK. The commonly ascribed label, ‘Somali’, projects an essentialised view of a homogenous and hermetically sealed group of people who share a set of ethnic particularities. This “Broad-Brush” homogeneity has been subject to evaluation during my sustained period of social engagement with SLS over a period of almost ten years (2008-present), where it became clear that while my Somali contacts maintained degrees of diasporic and local connections with a set of traditional cultural practices derived from a specific location in Somaliland, in London they live out local identities that have gone largely unnoticed by the research literature. These crucial under-analysed aspects have contributed to the view of Somalis as belonging to an ethnically homogenous group who share a common ancestral language, cultural practices and a uniform deep religious allegiance to Islam. Furthermore, there is a popular perception in the UK that construes Somalis in the UK as a socially problematic community. The mainstream media closely identify Somalis with spectacular headlines such as youth gangs and crime, for example, *The Sun* (30/03/2010) warned, ‘*Jail won’t stop Somali criminals coming to the UK ... the choice is stay there and be killed*’. Somalis in the UK have also been constructed as a group that is a burden on social welfare, *The Sun* featured this headline: “*We must be rental (SIC): Former asylum seeker lives in luxurious £1.8 million home fitted out with the latest mod-cons – all paid for by housing benefits*” (*The Sun* 12/12/2007: 1). Another popular theme is the question of Somalis’ involvement in jihadism, as *The Telegraph* (18/02/2012) reported British Somali men who were recruited to fight for the Al Shabaab – ‘the Al Qaeda inspired terrorist group’ - in Somalia, but more importantly, ‘*Security Service fears that British volunteers who survive the bloody civil war may return home as hardened terrorists eager to launch attacks against the UK*’. These headlines reinforce the negative construct of Somalis in the UK as criminals,

welfare benefit fraudsters and religious zealots who are ready to commit terrorist attacks indiscriminately. Although I do not dispute the validity of reports generated by the mainstream media and the UK research literature, the above portrayals do not align with my experience of long-term social engagement with a group of South Londoners of Somali descent (SLS). Contrary to the view of Somalis in the popular press, my Somali contacts were not chronically dependent on social welfare benefits. Most of them are highly educated and were either gainfully employed in the public sector as teachers and social care workers or self-employed business people.

Some examples of variations, trajectories and ethnic positionings

Here, I provide some examples of the variations, diverse biographical trajectories and ethnic positionings that I have observed during my encounters as a teacher in the abovementioned school. In my class for example, we have Aweys, a 19-year-old male born in a refugee camp in Kenya, lived in the Netherlands before settling in East London in 2004. Aweys' appearance and behaviour were consistent with most London teenagers as his normal attire consists of the latest Nike trainers, distressed jeans that sit low on his hips and colourful shirts with hip hop artists or a picture of Bob Marley emblazoned on the front. As the practical joker of the class, he can be disruptive at times but can be counted on to provide comic relief during most sessions. In contrast to Aweys' jocular nature, Anwar was a quiet and unassuming student who has to be coaxed to participate in conversational activities during lessons. A newly arrived immigrant, his migration history differs from Aweys' in that he was born in Somaliland and lived in the UAE with his uncle for 12 years before arriving in the UK. Anwar was a very respectful student and he was routinely impeccably dressed in freshly ironed shirts and smart trousers. Fouziah on the other hand, was a 21-year-old student who was born in the UAE and had spent about five years in Sweden with her aunt and seven cousins before settling in London. During the period that she attended my classes, she was employed as a customer service assistant at a supermarket. She always wore the hijab to the community school and she was one of my best students in that particular class which she regularly attended. During class time, she made great effort to produce Standard English pronunciations and reprimands other students when they communicate in other languages. During an English lesson with a specific focus on language form, I wanted to elicit the use of the simple past tense from

the students by asking them to talk about their weekend. As usual, Aweys volunteered to be the first speaker and said that he spent it with his extended family members from different parts of the UK. When I asked him whether the occasion was a celebration of somebody's wedding or birthday, he replied '*It's tribal innit?*'. When I questioned him about the meaning of the phrase, the students laughed amongst themselves and Aweys said '*It's about being Somali innit?*'. As a person interested in researching languages, his intriguing response did not provide clarity to my question. First and foremost, his utterance is at once problematic and compelling. The first half of the utterance – '*It's tribal*' – evokes images of traditional life characterized by rural feuding communities delineated by kinships and practicing folk customs (Harris 2011) whilst the multipurpose question tag '*innit*' is a token of traditional working class London speech – a contraction of the question tag *isn't it?*. In addition, he pronounced '*innit*' with a discernible East London accent. This is fascinating to me as the utterance seems to be a convergence of the cultural practices of the motherland and the linguistic practices of contemporary London. In addition, the way he said '*It's about being Somali innit?*' implied that it is common knowledge that Somalis are closely associated with the practices and discourses of clanship. What is notable about Aweys's utterances is the inference that the nature of Somali ethnicities is somehow constituted by cultural practices not typically found in the UK alongside one of the emblems of contemporary London speech. Aweys's utterances provided the impetus for me to conduct a small case study for my MA dissertation entitled '*It's where you're at': The construction of multilingual identities among Somali students in a new university in 2011*'. My study showed how Somali university students' self-accounts of their language learning history and language use have been shaped by their interactions in a range of social contexts. In my review of literature on Somali ethnicity for my MA dissertation, I was also struck by the ways Somalis in the UK have been uniformly affixed to particular aspects of traditional Somali cultural practices that do not reflect the diversity of the people that I provided in the vignette above. My experience of doing the research and writing my MA dissertation intensified my interest in researching the nature of Somali ethnicities, leading to my decision to pursue this present thesis. By closely focusing on the self-accounts and observed practices of a group of SLS at a specific location, this thesis offers a view of the nature of Somali ethnicities that have been largely overlooked by the UK Somali research literature to date. This thesis does not make a major proclamation about the nature of Somali ethnicity in contemporary UK, nor does it intend to provide an absolute understanding of a singular, bounded notion of

ethnicity which is applicable to all Somalis in the UK. What this thesis attempts to do is to investigate the formation of emergent Somali ethnicities in a specific urban London setting by asking:

1. What view of social self-positionings emerge from SLS' observed cultural practices and routine talk at my research site?
2. How do SLS position themselves in relation to social class differences, traditional cultural practices of clan affiliation, religious allegiance to Islam and gender relations from small accounts of their lived experiences?

In short, the study investigates the situated and emergent ethnicities arising from the actual practices, self-declared stances and communicative behaviour of a small group of people of Somali descent at a specific place. These previously un-researched but crucial aspects I argue, contribute to a more precise understanding of the nature of Somali ethnicities in urban contexts. In the following chapter summaries, I provide the reader with a preview of the topics that will be covered in this thesis.

Chapter one is a review of a range of relevant UK Somali research literature. While acknowledging the contribution it has made to an understanding of Somali ethnicity, I will outline the critical limitations in its portrayals. This chapter shows the ways Somalis in the UK have been essentialised as a group with a set of ethnic particularities that were viewed to be 'different' from the cultural practices of the host society. Most of the UK research literature has caricatured Somalis as a group of people who are deeply entrenched in traditional cultural practices such as clanship and deep Muslim religiosity that were viewed to be problematic in their efforts to integrate in the UK. Second, there are limited ways in which language has been treated in the analysis of Somali culture. The language practices of Somalis in the UK are characterized by a Somali/English dichotomy. Crucially, the importance of the discourses and ways of talking and practices of Somali ethnicities have been largely overlooked. Thirdly, there is a relative lack of ethnographic detail about the ways Somalis' lived experiences may contribute to their self-declared ethnic positionings. Given these limitations in the UK research literature, my study argues that a nuanced account of the formation of Somali ethnicities in the UK requires ethnographic studies of small groups of Somalis in the UK with a focus of the observed practices and communicative behaviour to facilitate the discussion and analysis of emerging Somali ethnicities.

Chapter two provides an overview of the methodological approaches that were deployed in the existing research literature. It reviews studies with approaches ranging from questionnaire-based interviews to qualitative case studies with the focus group and individual interviews, studies with ethnographic sensibilities based on semi-structured interviews and mixed method approaches. While these reviewed approaches have contributed to the research literature, the findings have portrayed Somalis as a homogenous group of people who shares similar ethnic particularities. One of the problems with these portrayals could be due to the lack of interpretive analyses of the research subjects' narratives collected from qualitative interviews. This study departs from these assumptions and argues research on Somali ethnicities in the UK requires an ethnographically informed study with a focus on interpreting the observed practices and ways of talking among small groups in specific locations. The question then becomes how does one research communicative habits and observed practices in an empirically grounded manner to allow the research subjects' lived experiences to freely emerge? In terms of methodology, the data was collected by observational field notes of the enactment of practices and discourses at the site, conversational interviews to elicit SLS' stances on a range of topics, audio recordings of naturally occurring talk in the classroom and at the school space and finally, retrospective interviews. These fieldnotes depict the formation of Somali ethnicities at the site and show why it is important to observe the actual practices. Second, multiple casual conversational interviews were conducted with 3 adults and 7 young people. These were recorded and transcribed, providing a source of data to investigate their biographical trajectories and self-accounts of their lived experiences. Thirdly, self-recorded naturally occurring talk were collected from two of the adults and three young people. These were supplemented by classroom recordings of young SLS' naturally occurring speech. These recordings provide a rich source of data in the attempt to understand young SLS' self -accounts of their ethnic positionings in relation to the lived experiences of engaging with their multi-ethnic peers. In short, these methods of data collection provided a platform from which to focus on my informants' voices and interpret the ethnic positionings emerging from their talk. The platform shows how data consisting of participant observation fieldnotes, conversational interviews and classroom recordings of classroom talk contributes to a more precise understanding of the nature of SLS ethnicities by their conscious and unconscious self-declared stances on a range of topics.

Chapter three highlights the importance of investigating the specificities of the locality in any understanding of urban Somali ethnicities. It maps out the terrain in which my research informants live their everyday lives by firstly locating the research site geographically within London. The chapter also provides some aspects of this area's historical and current sociodemographic characteristics. Chapter three argues Somali ethnicities must be understood in relation to place. It shows how previous theoretical lens on Somali ethnicities in the research literature should be set aside because in superdiversity, Somali ethnic formations must be understood in relation to the ethnic differences and cultural practices of the inhabitants of specific localities. It shows how a construal of Somalis in the UK by the research literature as a group who as exists as an 'island' in the conditions of superdiversity is inherently problematic. This chapter provides the basis of argument that Somalis in the UK are not impervious to the effects of their place or residence. My thesis shows how a part of Somali ethnicities is contoured by the effects of living in a superdiverse locality. Insufficiently analysed details such as these in the research literature have undoubtedly contributed to the idea that Somalis as a group, are hermetically sealed and unaffected by the effects of their social encounters in their places of residence.

Chapter four stresses the importance of investigating the effects of SLS' places of origin and trajectories of mobility on their social self-positionings vis-a-viz Somali ethnicity and on their self-declared stances on a set of 'traditional' cultural practices. It provides portraits of individual SLS by tracing their biographical trajectories. In an era of superdiversity, it is difficult to presuppose aspects of ethnicities by reading the label 'Somali'. Every SLS has a unique trajectory of mobility. The individual biographies revealed how among adult SLS, the nature of Somali ethnicities is constituted by a person's place of origin, migration trajectory, language(s), diasporic connections with the homeland and observance of a set of 'traditional' cultural practices. This chapter also shows that in general, adult SLS have not spent significant lengths of time in their homeland even though their self-declared stances position themselves as belonging to a particular group of people who are located in a specific area in Somaliland. Among most of the young SLS, notions of Somali ethnicities have been transmitted by their parents or carers though most of them only have a hazy understanding of what this entails. This chapter demonstrates that sketches of individual biographies are crucial in providing a view of the nature of Somali ethnicities in superdiversity.

Chapter five investigates some of the ways in which the narratives and moral stories of Somali ‘traditions’ are declared and practiced in a modern context. The chapter does not make an absolute declaration about the nature of Somali ethnicity in the UK but rather, it highlights the tensions between ‘traditional’ discourses and practices and the pressures of life in a modern, liberal and relatively secular Western society. This chapter provides a layered account in which some SLS desire to reproduce the discourses and practices of ‘tradition’ but encounter challenges in trying to comply with it. It also shows a weaker compliance with ‘tradition’ among young SLS, as there were traces of self-declared allegiances to a set of Somali cultural practices, but they do not appear to possess in-depth knowledge or understanding of these discourses and practices.

Chapter six investigates the indirect ways in which Somali ethnicities were signalled among SLS at my research site. It shows how Somali ethnicities can be conveyed not by big proclamations but instead in muted but rooted communicative habits. It draws attention to my observations of the routine social practices mediated by natural talk rather than reporting my informants’ self-declarations of their language proficiencies. These previously un-researched details provide examples of how ‘traditional’, unforced deference to members of higher social ranking was bestowed by making the small gestures of respect and by initiating the greeting exchanges. It also shows how a set of small but recurring discourse markers in Somali language created a collective ethnic solidarity among members of SLS. Further, this chapter also shows how SLS shared religious identity in Islam were routinely transmitted in some of my adult informants’ expressive interjections in Arabic. These rooted communicative habits that invoke Allah were routinely and unconsciously produced to convey a range of emotions. In short, chapter 6 argues that a close attention to the unthinking, ritualised communicative habits provides a view of how a collective Somali identity is cemented at my research site.

Chapter seven reveals the relationship between place and the practice of Somali ethnicities. This chapter explores how local Somali ethnicities are shaped within the social landscape of contemporary superdiverse South London. It shows how the nature of Somali ethnicities must be understood in relation to the ingrained discourses of race and

colour, ethnicities, class differences and cultural practices that are specific to the localities in which Somalis in the UK live their everyday lives. It seeks to understand the formation of Somali ethnicities that emerge from my informants' small accounts of local negotiations of ethnicity in relation to class practices, cultural habits and ingrained norms in South London. In particular, it examines the forms of SLS social self-positionings in a multi-ethnic locality. It also shows how SLS were sometimes misrecognised and excluded from a notion of blackness in South London. In this scenario, young SLS are prevented from appropriating particular meanings associated with South London black social identities. It also shows how, in a specific superdiverse local environment, Somalis have to both compete and cooperatively co-exist with others living under other ethnic labels.

Conclusion

To sum up, this study offers previously unreported insights into the nature of superdiverse Somali ethnicities. By focusing on the observed practices and discourses among a small group of SLS, it shows how Somali ethnicities might be understood in relation to individual biographical trajectories, attachments to traditional cultural practices and place. It argues that these accounts are crucial in superdiversity as there isn't a single version of Somali ethnicity. It shows how if place is taken into consideration, a more nuanced view of Somali ethnicities can be gained because this study refutes the idea that Somalis in the UK exist as a bounded entity that is impermeable by the effects of living in a modern, urban and superdiverse context.

Chapter 1: Conceptualising Somali ethnicities in superdiversity

Introduction

In my study's quest to provide a textured account of the emergent nature of Somali ethnicities at a specific Southeast London locality, this chapter firstly reviews the portrayals of Somalis in the UK as reported by the research literature. The research literature on Somali ethnicities in this review consists of academic research studies, Government funded reports and unpublished studies. This chapter acknowledges some of the important contributions that have shed some light on the nature of Somali ethnicities in the UK. However, I will also identify the limitations of a set of recurrent claims which portrays Somalis in the UK as a putatively homogenous group of people who are tightly cemented to a set of cultural practices not typically found in modern contexts. This group of people has been fixed with particular versions of (i) traditional modes of social organization such as kinship and clan affiliation, (ii) deep religiosity, and (iii) the practice of 'traditional' gender relations and modes of dress. Adherence to these traditional practices were viewed to be incompatible with life in a modern, secular Western society and by extension, exacerbated the problem of Somalis' integration into wider British society. Some of the research literature have also alluded to a causal relationship between UK Somalis' alleged unwillingness to integrate with a host of social problems such as gaining employment and an over dependence on welfare benefits. I will also argue that to a large extent, the portraits of UK Somalis were clumsily sketched by the research literature as a group of people with uniform beliefs, practices and problems. This limiting view has omitted crucial differences with regard to its members' diverse biographies. As I will show in chapter 4, SLS have varied migration trajectories prior to their arrival in the UK. My adult informants' varying degrees of attachments to diasporic connections and practices do not appear to have impeded their relative success in obtaining gainful employment or their ability to traverse across multiple social contexts. Further, while this present study does not refute the salience of Somali traditional cultural practices among my key informants, chapter 5 provides a layered account of the ways 'tradition' was evoked and enacted. Crucially, the research corpus hitherto, lack contributions that

investigate the effects of Somalis' 'local negotiations of ethnicities' (Amin 2002: 959) in specific localities which this present study aims to repair.

In an attempt to address some of the limitations and oversights of the research corpus on UK Somalis, the second objective of this chapter is to identify a theoretical framework that enables this study to shade a more precise view of the nature of Somali ethnicities. This complex undertaking necessitates a theoretical foundation informed by insights developed by the cross disciplinary fields of diaspora studies, cultural studies, sociology and sociolinguistics. Further, this thesis shows why an understanding of Somali ethnicities requires a theoretical framework based on non-essentialist conceptualisations of race and ethnicity in the contemporary era of superdiversity (Vertovec 2007). As such, this chapter also argues for the need to firstly, observe and interpret the diasporic practices, idioms and stances of the active Somali diaspora and second, to view diaspora as an incomplete project.

Section 1 provides the background of the phases of Somali settlement in the UK. Consisting of people from different areas in Somalia and during different periods, Somalis' phases of settlement in the UK were driven by different factors. In a sense, this section provides a prelude to the problem of applying the homogeneity perspective on UK Somalis as belonging to a unitary notion of Somaliness. I will also attempt to provide an understanding of the notion of clanship as reported by the Somalia research literature. Second, I survey a range of UK Somali research literature to gain an understanding of the ways in which the nature of Somali ethnicities is portrayed in the UK. Whilst this research corpus' topics of investigation range from the role of remittances in nation building (Hassan 2014) to the ways Somali females undergo experiences of piety (Liberatore 2013), there appears to be a set of recurrent themes that are prominent in their explications of Somali ethnicities. These themes revolve around their perceived unbending attachment to a set of cultural practices that were reported to have originated from Somalia. In the subsections, these claims are investigated, and I argue that a nuanced account of how Somalis in the UK declare and enact traditional Somali cultural practices have been missed or omitted by the research literature.

1.1 Somalis in the UK: phases of settlement

In advance of my review of the research literature on UK Somalis, this section establishes the contextual background of Somali migration and phases of settlement in the UK. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS 2011), there were an estimated 103,000 Somali-born immigrants residing in the UK. Most of these immigrants were reported to live in England with the overwhelming majority settled in London. There are also reports of smaller Somali communities that have settled in Birmingham, Bristol, Manchester, Leicester, Sheffield and Cardiff. The settlement of Somalis in the UK is generally considered to have occurred in three phases:

1. Due to Britain's historical colonial links with Somaliland, the initial phase of settlement at the end of the 19th century include the early transient communities of Somali seamen who worked for the British Navy. This group settled in the port cities of Cardiff, Liverpool and London. These men were employed as stokers, boiler men and crew (Hopkins 2006). Communities of northern Somali men were employed in the dockland areas of Cardiff, Liverpool, and London, with smaller settlements in Hull, Bristol, and South Shields (Harris 2004). Almost exclusively male, many of the early sailors came from British Somaliland and lived in boarding houses run by other Somalis (Hopkins 2006).
2. Between 1989 and 1995, Somalis arrived in large numbers in London as a result of the conflict in Somalia. The first arrivals mainly were from the Isaaq clan of the northern region who were persecuted under the regime of Siad Barre. This group of Somali migrants are considered to be educated and have the ability to communicate in English (Hopkins 2006). This group settled mainly in the East of London around Tower Hamlets and Newham along with other clans from the north of Somalia.
3. The collapse of the Barre regime in the 1990s has seen an influx of Somali asylum seekers affiliated to his clan from the south of Somalia. This group of Somalis are perceived to be uneducated and do not speak English (Harding et al 2007). Somalis from the south settled in Camden and Islington in north London,

Streatham in the south London borough of Lambeth (mostly the Hawlye clan), and in Kilburn (Brent), Paddington (Westminster) and in Acton in the borough of Ealing (mostly of the Darod clan) in the west (Hopkins 2006).

As outlined above, Somalis' migration to the UK is not a recent phenomenon due to colonial ties to the British Protectorate of Somaliland. However, the impetus that drove the second and third phases of migration were attributed to the period of instability in Somalia. It is also important to note that the areas of settlement in the UK are reported to have been organised along the lines of area of origin or affiliation to particular clans, a concept that will be elaborated in the upcoming section. As shown in this section, the research literature has clearly recorded the multiple periods of settlement in the UK that were linked to Somali immigrants' places of origin and motives for migration. However, the research literature has neglected to provide a precise analysis of the ways that the effects of the diverse biographical trajectories of individual Somalis in the UK contribute to an understanding of Somali ethnicities. Section 2 aims to provide an understanding of clanship or clan affiliation, a form of social organisation that is tightly fixed on people of Somali descent both in Somalia and the diaspora.

1.2 Somalis and the question of clan

This section aims to develop an understanding of the concept of the Somali traditional cultural practice of clanship in its place of origin as Harris (2004) has pointed out,

[a]lthough a difficult topic, the question of clan has to be confronted in any discussion of Somalis in the diaspora, and must start with an explanation of its role in the country of origin... kinship forms the basis of social, political and economic life... it is often said about Somalis that it is not where you are from which is significant, but whom; family not place of birth. Clan overlaps with region, but it is genealogy not geography that determines alliances (2004: 66).

The forthcoming subsections review the anthropological studies on the role of clan affiliation in Somalia to develop an understanding and the ways in which this concept is said to delineate the boundary of Somaliness. This is not to say that my thesis is tightly focused on clan affiliation and it does not view this social force as an inherent trait among my key informants. However, due to its prominence as the *leitmotif* in the literature both in Somalia (Lewis 1961, 1998, Luling 2006, Besteman 1995, 1996, Kusow 2004, Samatar

1991) and in the UK diaspora (Harris 2004, Griffiths 1997, 2000, 2002, Samamani 2014, Hopkins 2005), this section offers an understanding of clanship in its place of origin in advance of my investigation of the ways it is alleged to govern the social organisation of Somalis in the UK context.

1.2.1 Somalis and clan affiliation in Somalia

This subsection investigates the notion of clan affiliation and the ways it is reported to structure social life in Somalia. The often-cited anthropologist I. M. Lewis (1998) argues that it is a considerable force ‘bred in the bone’ and running ‘in the blood’ of Somalis which has influenced the course of Somali history (Lewis, 1998: 233). Lewis’s (1998) primordialist view of clanship somewhat parallels with that of Luling (2006), a social anthropologist who asserts that in order to investigate the nature of Somali ethnicity,

one must understand the conception of genealogy that the Somalis have inherited from their past. For them, to know one’s descent is not the prerogative of a few leading families but belongs to everyone... for most Somalis the use of genealogy is to validate one’s membership in a group. It structures the ‘clan’, which is according to one’s point of view the foundation or the curse of Somali life. It may well be counted as both, since it is the principle both of co-operation and opposition between groups (Luling 2006: 471).

In the above, Luling (2006) claims that the concept of genealogy is the sole mechanism for Somalis’ validation of their group membership and for her, the genealogy narrative is one the ways clans are structured. Lewis (1961) introduced the concept of segmentary lineage organization into the discourse on Somali politics and he identified five ‘clan families’, namely, Dir, Isaaq, Hawiye, Daarood, and Digil and Rahanweyn [also known as Digil- Mirifleh] that are located in specific regions of Somalia and each of these clan families in turn comprises of a variable number of clans. Lewis (1961) finds Somali political structure to be highly decentralized and ‘is based on kinship units, defined by genealogical reckoning (abtirsiinyo, in northern, Somali, or abtirsi, in southern Somali: literally, "ancestor counting")’ (1961: 101). Interestingly, Lewis associates the northern Somali definition of ‘genealogical reckoning’ with the standard form of Somali language whilst ‘southern Somali’ was considered to be a dialect. In this sense, Lewis is alluding to the hierarchical relationship between the different forms of Somali language and by extension, the relationship between Somalis from the north and the south.

Kusow (2004) however, contests the primordialist view of clanship and he argued that the genealogy narrative is constructed on the belief that

the Somali founding ancestor originated from southern Arabia, settled in the north-eastern region of the country, and married a local Somali woman. This union, according to the narrative, started what later became the source of contemporary Somali society and by extension its national identity. As simple as it may seem, the above narrative establishes two ontological points: (1) an original, Muslim and non-indigenous founding ancestor and, (2) an original dispersal point. The first part of the narrative establishes the Somali ancestor as an immigrant from Southern Arabia who practiced Islamic values, otherwise Arab and Muslim. The second part of the narratives locates the original landing as well as the settlement place of the founding ancestor in the northeastern region of the country (Kusow *ibid*: 2).

In the above, Kusow (2004) interestingly points out that the lineage narrative frames Somalis as a group of people who emerged from the union between a non-indigenous man from southern Arabia and a female native of Somalia. This point of contact is also viewed to be the genesis of Somalis' association with Islamic values. However, Kusow (2004) contests the notion of clanship as a primordial trait among Somalis and argued that the genealogy narrative is 'based on [Somali] state-sponsored idealistic images and founding myths that have no practical application to the everyday realities of the people' (2004: 1) that has contributed to the fabrication of the 'social boundary of Somaliness on the basis of lineage priorities' (*ibid*). For Kusow (2004), the social boundary of Somaliness is constructed by a paradigm known as the 'Maandeeq and camouflaged as national symbols and values' (*ibid*: 2).

Subsection 1.2.1 has shown how the notion of clanship is perceived to be an innate trait among Somalis by anthropologists such as Lewis (1961, 1998) and Luling (2006) above. However, Kusow (2004) argued that the genealogy narrative is founded on state sponsored ideals which have in part, caused the divisive clan politics. Having provided some of the ways the concept of clanship has been interwoven into one of the defining characteristics of Somaliness in Somalia, the upcoming subsection investigates the ways in which clan affiliation has been reported in the UK research literature.

1.2.2 Somalis and clan affiliation in the UK

For many commentators (Griffiths 1997, 2002, Hopkins 2006, Harris 2004), clan identities are understood as a fixture of Somali identity. Somalis' alignment or

disalignment with particular clans are alleged to have divided the diaspora in ways that hamper integration and perpetuate marginality. As the reviewed literature in the successive passages show, clan affiliation is perceived to be salient for Somalis in the UK in their daily lives by contouring the ways the diaspora views itself as a collective that is organised by clan divisions (Griffiths 2000; 2002; El Solh 1991).

In her study of first-generation Somali immigrants in the UK, El Solh (1991, 1993) argued that clanship operates as a set of functional relationships, support networks and forms of alliance which have been packed in its original configuration, transported from Somalia to be subsequently unpacked and reactivated in Tower Hamlets. Griffiths (1997, 2002) however, finds this view to be problematic as the insights developed from his ethnographic study of Somali immigrants in East London argue for the

co-existence of tradition and innovation in relation to the interpretation of clanship and the emergence of new collective and individual identities (Griffiths 1997: 5).

In the above quote, Griffiths (1997) importantly has acknowledged the possibilities for Somalis in the UK to align with ‘new collective and individual identities’ and he viewed this phenomenon as a result of the reinterpretation of clanship in the diaspora. This is a very important insight for my study as it is concerned with the emergent nature of Somali ethnicities in the UK. However, Griffiths (2002) also claims that his informants’ orientations to Somalia remained strong and he suggests that clan divisions originating from the home country were transplanted in the diaspora even though his key informants were mostly concerned with the ‘struggle for everyday survival’ (Griffiths 2002: 98). Importantly, Griffiths (1997) pointed out that some of his informants encountered problems with their attempts to impose traditional social hierarchy which has a high reverence for clan elders. According to Griffiths (1997), some the newly arrived immigrants question these clan elders’ role and ‘the legitimacy of the old ‘ways of doing things’ (Griffiths 1997: 13). For one of his informants, clan identifications have ‘been displaced by those of class and the achievement of social position through education’ (Griffiths 1997: 14). This particular insight from Griffiths’s (1997) study is crucial and to an extent, demonstrates the effects of UK social processes in contouring his informant’s opinion. In sum, Griffiths’ (1997, 2002) work has provided an important backdrop of the issues that are important to the Somali community in East London and more tellingly, he pointed out that although clanship remains an important force; its role has been

transformed. This leads Griffiths to call for ‘the need to reformulate the Somali ‘imagined identity’ (Griffiths 1997: 5) with the topic of clanship ‘as a focal point for renegotiation of identity for those living in exile’ (Griffiths 1997: *ibid*). In short, Griffiths’ (2002) viewed clan affiliation as ‘ongoing attachments’ that were “inherited from the home country” (Griffiths 2002: 97, 94). It is important to recognise that Griffiths’ study was one of the first ethnographic studies of Somalis in the UK and that he has created some space for my work in his call to reformulate Somali identities in the UK. However, Griffiths did not provide interpretive accounts of how ‘ongoing attachments’ are reproduced and enacted in his informants’ narratives. Further, whilst the author has exercised care in not categorizing this community as being governed by clanship in El Solh’s terms above, he has nevertheless prioritised its role in the formulation of Somali identities in East London. Crucially, he neglected to provide an interpretive analysis of his informant’s account of the possible influences of ‘class and the achievement of social position through education’ (Griffiths: 2002: 14). In short, Griffiths’s (1997, 2002) work has provided important insights for my work but his study did not provide a precise account of ways in which his research subjects position themselves in relation to the notion of clanship in contemporary UK. He has also in part, generalised his findings to apply to all Somalis in the UK, a notion which my study does not subscribe to.

In McGown’s (1999) study, the reification of clan divisions by UK media reports on Somalis was highlighted. In particular, McGown (1999) cited an account in which some Somalis in the UK who were affiliated with a particular clan were requested to fund a militia by relatives in Somalia to reclaim their land that was occupied by another clan. According to McGown (1999), the benefactors were ultimately persuaded to fund the project as a result of watching a video with images of their family members undergoing hardship rather than to support factionalism. However, as she rightly pointed out, the outcome was that money has been remitted to fund the project which in turn, intensified the reification of clan divisions (McGown 1999). Hopkins’ (2006) comparative study of Somali community organisations in London and Toronto argues that the absence of a ‘united, collaborative Somali voice’ is attributed to ‘the persistent clan dynamics among Somalis and the solutions Somalis find, and partly from failings in service and funding provision’ (Hopkins 2006:15). Hopkins (2006) also argues that

in the Somali case, exclusionary dynamics undermine the role of community organizations in rebuilding community and belonging and providing a safe and empowering setting in which individuals and communities may regain confidence and begin the process of integration within the receiving society (Hopkins 2006: 17)

In this light, clan divisions are viewed to be a major obstacle for Somali community organisations in their efforts in ‘rebuilding community and belonging’. Hopkins (2006) clearly views community organisations as one of the key drivers for integration and creating a sense of belonging for newly arrived immigrants in the host society. However, one of the oversights of her argument is her neglect to scrutinise the criteria that these organisations must meet in order to receive Government funding. For example, at my research site, one of the conditions for continued funding from the local council stipulates that all the students that attend the school must be categorised as ‘Somali’ who live in a specific locality. In this light, local Government funding policies were complicit in the portrayal of Somalis in the UK as an insular, bounded group of people who are unwilling to integrate into the host society.

More recently, Samamani (2014) argues that

clan identities need to be seen in the context of the breakdown of a mode of being in Somalia coupled with the particular possibilities for constituting a sense of belonging in the UK, which encourage many Somalis to pursue transnational forms of belonging. Consequently, clan dynamics in the UK must be seen not as an endemic division within the Somali community but as a multifaceted response to the broader possibilities for identity, agency and meaning that they face, locally and transnationally (Samamani 2014 18).

In this rendering, the role of clan is viewed as a form of transnational belonging and provides a mean of identification for members of the Somali diaspora. Samamani’s (2014) argument dismisses the notion of clan as a primordial or innate trait of Somalis which leads to endemic divisions within the community but instead, it is one of the means of responding to wider possibilities of identifications within the social landscape of contemporary UK. Importantly, he has acknowledged that Somali identities are related to local and transnational meanings. For Samamani (2014), the persistent circulation of clan discourse isn’t proof of an ‘ongoing attachment’ in Griffiths’s (2002) terms. Although Samamani raised an important argument here, he did not provide empirical evidence of how transnational clan identities among Somalis in the UK were declared and enacted.

Summary

Subsections 1.2.1 and 1.2.2 have provided some of the discourses in circulation about clanship in Somalia and the UK diaspora. Perceived as a primordial trait by some researchers on Somalia (Lewis 1961, 1998, Luling 2006), the concept of clanship is viewed to have travelled with Somali immigrants to the UK (Harris 2004, Griffiths 1999, 2000, Hopkins 2006) and continues to be viewed to be a salient force in their daily lives (Samamani 2014). However, in relation to my work, the way the literature covers clan does not emerge during my encounters with my Somali contacts. My study does not provide an absolute view of how clanship might be configured in the lives of my informants but chapters 4 and 5 provide some suggestive examples of how a small section of Somalis (SLS) in a specific South London location declare and practice their clan identities. My study reveals that adult SLS communicate their clan identities and place of origin in subtle ways and while young SLS demonstrated ambiguous understandings of this concept.

Section 1.3 investigates a range of reports on the second aspect of traditional cultural practices that were associated with Somalis in the UK – their perceived strong and undeviating allegiance to Islamic beliefs and practices.

1.3 UK Somalis and Muslim religiosity

In this section, I examine the religious aspect of Somali ‘tradition’ which alongside clanship, figures prominently in the research literature. As the following passages show, the research literature view Islam as an important source of self-identification for Somalis in the UK and the observance of Muslim rituals are purported to govern their everyday lives. Hassan (2014) for example, argues that for *all* Somalis, ‘Islam is everything and a way of life’ (Hassan 2014: 8). Hassan (2014) also claims that

Islam is not only the principal religion, but it is also the primary organiser of social relations and economic structures. Although Somalis believe in the Islamic faith, unlike several other Muslim nations, they prefer to identify themselves as Muslims in all spaces and contexts. If the local cultural practice is compatible with this tradition, it is accepted and encouraged. However, if the cultural practices are incompatible with the Sharia¹, it is rejected (Hassan *ibid*: 8).

¹ A set of laws derived from the religious precepts of Islam

In this rendering, Somalis are constructed as a group of undeviating religious zealots unwilling to engage in local cultural practices that are unaligned to the Sharia. Hassan (2014) further claims that young Somali males in his study exhibited

a great affinity with religiosity encompassing the Muslim Ummah², Allah and the mosque as a place of spiritual practice. Almost half of all respondents seemed to value their association with their Islamic faith' (Hassan 2014: 259).

Interestingly, Hassan (2014) appeared to have contradicted his argument that 'Islam is everything' (ibid) for *all* Somalis in the UK as only 'almost half' of his participants pledge strong allegiance to Islam. This narrow and bounded view of Somalis' undeviating immersion in Islamic principles and rituals mirrors Jordan's (2004) portrayal of Somalis in Wales:

Somalis are known to be staunch believers in Islam and can also be seen as captives of their culture wherever they go and whatever they do. Any activity that is not appropriate to the broad boundaries of their faith and culture is simply boycotted. Thus, where there are no culturally and socially appropriate facilities, it is likely that Somalis will not make use of these services' (Jordan 2004: 26).

The arguments proposed by Hassan (2014) and Jordan (2004) above contributes to the portrayal of Somalis in the UK as a group of people who are tightly constrained by their strict observance of Islamic principles. Compliance with Islamic principles is linked to an isolationist perspective which by extension, have allegedly contributed to Somalis' 'boycotting' of activities that cross the boundaries of faith and Somali culture.

For McGown (1999), Islam has emerged as a new form of belonging to offer British Somalis a multifaceted identity which allows for mutual engagement and recognition within the wider Muslim community, as well as a way of re-situating familiar 'Somali' meanings and practices within a stable broader context. This view is echoed by Sporton and Valentine's (2007) study which investigated the integration experiences young Somali refugees and asylum seekers. The authors argue the

increased importance of a Muslim identity to Somali refugees and asylum seekers adults stems from the fact that faith provides an important anchor within their broader experience of mobility and dislocation, and provides a means of ensuring that they do not lose their children to an 'alien' western individualistic culture (Sporton and Valentine 2007: 8).

² Ummah refers to the collective community of Muslims (Liberatore 2013)

In the above quote, Sporton and Valentine (2007) claim Muslim religiosity among Somalis has intensified in the diaspora as a way to make sense of their experiences of dispersal and to shield their children from local cultural influences. Further, Sporton and Valentine (2007) observed how

the identity 'Muslim' becomes for many young Somali people the most important and consistent way that they have of defining who they are... 92% of the Somali respondents to our survey claimed that their Muslim faith was 'important to their everyday life'.... it is possible to see how, and why, the identity 'Muslim' becomes for many young Somali people the most important and consistent way that they have of defining who they are' (Sporton and Valentine 2007: 9).

This proposition by Sporton and Valentine (2007) is compelling as it portrays young Somali refugees and asylum seekers as a group whose primary social identity is shaped by their religious affiliation with Islam. In their view, the experiences of migration and dis-location have intensified Somalis' self-identifications with Islam. In a comparative study of Somali refugees in Sheffield, UK and Aarhus in the Netherlands, Sporton et al (2009) report of the effects of locality on Somalis' depth of allegiance to Islam. The researchers argue that differences with regard to the extent Somalis adhere to Islamic teachings is attributed to

the density and relative stability of Muslim community networks [which] facilitate the repetition and regulation of particular cultural and gendered norms that constrain, though never fix, the way that what it means to be a Muslim is both materially and imaginatively produced. In contrast, the transient and less developed nature of Somali networks in Aarhus means that cultural and gendered norms are less rigidly mapped on to local space, allowing for more explicit possibilities in terms of how a Muslim identity might be enacted (Sporton et al 2009: 241).

In this light, Somalis' Muslim religiosity in the UK has been intensified as a result of the well-developed and extensive Muslim community networks encompassing multiple ethnic groups. For Sporton et al (2009), well established Muslim community networks in the UK inhibits the 'explicit possibilities' of identifying with Islam and as such, Somalis' Muslim identities in the UK are more constrained by traditional norms in comparison to Danish Somalis. Importantly, Sporton et al (2009) acknowledges the effects of local specificities in the ways Muslim identities might be enacted. However, Sporton et al's (2009) study did not offer a nuanced illustration of the possibility of varying depths of adherence to Islamic principles among their participants. My study builds on Sporton et al's (2009) work but it argues for a nuanced account that analyses my informants' self-

declarations and observed practices of Muslim rituals which reveals multiple depths of allegiance and adherence to Islamic principles. This reflects Change Institute's (2009) report which acknowledged that

while religion is acknowledged to be an important part of Somali culture, a number of respondents in the study stressed that it does not necessarily dominate everyday life. Strict adherence to orthopraxy varies in the community, particularly as in Britain being visible as a Muslim is seen by some Somalis as being 'out of step' with British culture' (Change Institute 2009: 39).

From this perspective, Change Institute's (2009) report recognises that religious allegiance to Islam does not necessarily govern all the aspects of daily life and that the degree of adherence to Islamic teachings vary among individual Somalis. However, Change Institute (2009) reports how the greater challenge is the lack of

belonging to the British, Somali culture or 'Muslim' culture in Britain which is potentially creating the greatest tensions within families and contributing to the exclusion of Somali youth from mainstream society. (Change Institute 2009: 43).

Here, Change Institute (2009) acknowledges the tensions that arise for Somali youth in their attempts to grapple with cultural identifications but the report views identities as bounded categories of 'British, Somali culture or Muslim culture'. By taking this view, Change Institute's (2009) report has dismissed the possibilities of multiple cultural identifications that are contoured by the effects of individual Somalis' biographical trajectories, length of stay in the UK and their exposure to and engagement with residents of diverse ethnicities in their localities. My study shows how a close analysis of the discursive and observed practices of a small group of Somalis in a specific site reveal the subtle and multiple ways in which alignments with 'British, Somali and Muslim culture' were declared.

Liberatore's (2013) multi-sited ethnographic study provided a more insightful view of young Somali females' experiences of fluid allegiances to Islam over a period of time. Liberatore (2013) investigated her Somali female informants' shifting allegiances to Islam by an analysis of the

forms and means through which these young women imagine novel relations to themselves and to others including kin, friends, potential husbands, and God...[which] reveals the multi-constituted, relational, and constantly shifting nature of the practising self (Liberatore 2013: 3)

Crucially, Liberatore (2013) has pointed out how adherence to Muslim practices is not uniform, fixed and generalizable to all Somali females. Her informants' depth of allegiance with Islam in this reading, is constituted in relation with a host of factors. My study builds on Sporton and Valentine (2007, 2009) Liberatore (2013) and Change Institute's (2009) findings by providing my informants' self-declarations and enactment of practices of compliance, part and non-compliance with Muslim rituals at a specific site. These previously under-researched details will be deliberated in Chapter 5.

Summary

In this section, I have highlighted and reviewed some of the claims about Muslim religiosity among Somalis in the UK. Adherence to religious orthopraxy is popularly viewed to govern the everyday lives of Somalis in the UK and for some commentators, Muslim identity is one of the defining characteristics of Somali ethnicities. In a somewhat similar vein to the ways they are viewed to practice clan divisions, Somalis in the UK are mostly viewed to share a similar depth of allegiance to Islam. While Change Institute (2009) and Liberatore (2013) have helpfully argued for the possibility of variable adherence to Islamic principles among Somalis in the UK, my study offers a nuanced account of my research informants' Muslim identities at a specific research site. A nuanced account is necessary because my research informants' practices, self-declarations and communicative habits exhibited a range of ways of relating to Muslim rituals and they have somehow found ways of maintaining these practices in a modern and relatively secular society. Some of my informants make strong declarations of allegiances to Islam while coexisting with other members who made weaker pledges and during certain moments, exhibited transgressive practices and produced blasphemous remarks. This is why an account of the enactments and discourses of Muslim identities among a small group of Somalis is required.

1.4 Somalis in the UK and 'traditional' gender relations

In addition to their alleged uncompromising deep-rooted allegiance to Islam, Somalis in the UK are also viewed to be a community who practices a set of 'traditional' gender relations which has been transported from Somalia. Somalis' alleged practices of

traditional gender relations in the UK is also seen to be problematic as Atubo & Batterbury (2001) argue,

Somalis are traditionally polygamous, marrying according to the Islamic code, a maximum of four wives. The number of wives a man has varies generally with age, seniority being associated with more spouses. In a country such as the UK that recognises by law that a man can be married to only one woman at a time, there is a dilemma for refugees whose family is composed of more than one wife and their children' (Atubo & Batterbury 2001: 6).

In the above, the authors have tightly fixed the traditional practice of polygamy as one of the defining characteristics of Somalis' practice of gender relations, and it is viewed as one of the contributing factors to their everyday problems in the UK. This is a compelling observation and it might be a reflection of the practices of a section of Somalis in the UK. However, this theme of polygamy did not emerge in my data and while I do not contest the plausibility of Atubo and Batterbury's (2001) report, the claim above concentrated on an ethnic particularity which is incompatible the norms of the host society. This perspective has inevitably contributed to the construal of a generalised view of the nature of Somali ethnicities in the UK. The following subsection shows how gender relations among Somalis in the UK are perceived to be structured by their religious allegiance to Islam.

1.4.1 UK Somalis and the question of gender relations structured by Islam

In general, UK Somalis have been perceived by the research literature as a group that practice gender relations that are structured by the teachings of Islam. According to Farah (2000),

[m]en are not expected to lift a finger in domestic tasks. They can argue that it is "dishonourable and un-Islamic for a man to be sullyng himself in this way ... in Somalia, where there are boys and girls in a family, the mother all the time trains the girl – clean up, wash the dishes, cook the food, give your brothers food. The boys don't even take the food from the pan, the girl has to take it to him (Farah 2000: 62).

Here Farah (2000) notes how the Somali cultural practice of gendered relations was structured by Islamic principles. In the UK, Somalis' perceived strict adherence to Islamic principles are claimed to constrain social interaction for Somali females. Phillips-Mundy

(2007) claims that 'in most Somali households, girls are still discouraged from attending mixed gender social gatherings, as it is seen as breaking the rules of purdah' (Phillips-Mundy *ibid*: 95). Somalis in the UK's lack of exposure to the host society is also viewed to be limited due to the claimed strict observation of the 'purdah', 'a Somali Islamic practice that articulates the need for physical separation of sexes' (Phillips-Mundy 2007:4). According to Phillips-Mundy (*ibid*), young Somali women are tightly policed by their family and the wider Somali Muslim community and '[i]f a girl is seen conversing with the opposite sex, they will be reprimanded by their family or by a community member for being a disobedient Muslim' (Phillips-Mundy 2007: 157). These strong claims of gender policing among Somalis in the UK are fascinating but the studies did not consider the problems with enforcing this Islamic practice in a liberal, secular, Western and modern society. Young Somali females must interact with their male peers in British schools and they use public transportation in which both genders are present. In short, public spaces in the UK are not gender segregated in order for Somalis to observe 'purdah'. On a more plausible note, Liberatore (2013) pointed out that gender segregation is not a concern for ALL Somali females as many of her informants' unmarried friends had boyfriends (Liberatore 2013: 64).

On the other hand, Somali men appear to be governed by a different set of Islamic principles as according to Phillips-Mundy (2007),

Somali men are doctrinally allowed more freedoms than Somali women, such as the right to marry outside the Muslim faith; therefore, parent(s) often afford boys more freedoms as compared to girls. Somali boys can travel, socialise outside the home and attend sporting events, whereas, in most Somali households, girls are still discouraged from attending mixed gender social gatherings, as it is seen as breaking the rules of purdah' (Phillips-Mundy *ibid*: 95).

Further, Ali (2001) claims individuals who choose to marry 'a non-Somali could result in ostracism from the family unless the spouse converts to Islam. Somali women who marry foreigners will experience more disapproval from their families than men' (Ali 2001: 197). Ali (*ibid*) has also argued in contrast to the general discourse that

the higher the level of education the greater the degree of empowerment, other research and policy having linked education to women's autonomy and emancipation [educated Somali women were more inclined to be] entrapped by concepts of family, honour, religion and their standing in the community. Such women were especially careful not to have their reputation besmirched by gossip and social ostracism (Ali *ibid*: 204).

In Ali's (2001) view, education is a way for Somali women to achieve upward social class mobility but has also affected an intensification of their Muslim religiosity.

1.4.2 UK Somalis and modes of dress

As I have illustrated above, for many of the researchers (McGown 1999, Harris 2004, Griffiths 2000), Islam has been identified as the major influence in shaping gender relations. To an extent, the principles of Islam extend to the regulation of modes of dress for female Somalis in the UK. For example, Ali (2001) explained that Somali

women are especially affected by Islamic practices because women and young girls are expected to wear the hijab (headscarf). But everywhere Muslim women are expected to dress modestly and those who have short or revealing clothes face censure from their family about their un-Islamic behaviour' (Ali 2001: 35).

In this view, female Somalis' lives are regulated by Islamic principles and societal pressures that extend to their ways of dressing to visibly mark their Muslim identities. This perspective constructs Somalis in the UK as a group who unquestioningly abide by certain Islamic principles with regard to Somali females' modes of dress. However, ways of dressing that index Somali females' Muslim identities in the UK should not be understood as an ingrained cultural practice that was transported from Somalia. In fact, one of Liberatore's (2013) informants revealed the practice of wearing the hijab was uncommon among female Somalis in Mogadishu during the 1970s. According to her informant Ifrah,

hardly any unmarried woman wore hijab. At school the hijab, considered a sign of "backward tradition", was banned as a threat to a secular education, and an ideology of modernisation and progress (Liberatore 2013: 64)

However, McGown's (1999) findings suggest lived experiences and migration trajectories have somehow impacted on female Somalis' choice to wear the hijab in the diaspora. According to McGown (1999),

[t]he role of Somali women in the diaspora is undergoing significant change as a result of the influence of Islamists and the migratory experience. Many women wore the hijab for the first time in the diaspora as a way of asserting their Muslim identity, rather than because they were instructed by a father or husband. In many cases the decision to wear the hijab is accompanied by an increased understanding of the Qur'an and a concomitant feeling of increased power to make decisions about their lives and identity' (McGown 1999: 43).

McGown's (1999) assertions suggest the choice to wear the hijab is symbolic of Somali females' Muslim identity in the diaspora which in turn, communicated the increased depth of their religious knowledge. In this reading, wearing the hijab is a personal choice for Somali females to communicate their Muslim identity which in some cases, demonstrates the individual's increased depth of knowledge of the Qur'an. McGown's (1999) view somewhat parallels Harris's (2004) proposition that instead of the Western view of 'Autonomy' which amounts to a woman's right to not wear the hijab,

a choice to wear the hijab (headscarf) and observe Muslim prayer times can evidence confidence and self-assertion as much as would a decision to reject them (Harris 2004: 65).

According to Hopkins (2006), 'being Somali' incorporates a range of ethnic particularities including clothing and religion. Hopkins (2006) points out that in a context in which Somalis have to co exist with people of diverse ethnicities,

[t]he degree to which Somali women remain - or become - visibly Somali may varyingly be attached to increased religiosity, raising children to respect Somali traditions and Islamic values, or as a means to distinguish themselves from other Muslim or African people (2006: 270).

In Hopkins's (2006) rendering, being 'visibly Somali' may be marked by an attachment to increased religiosity, by the transmission of Somali moral values to their children or simply to make themselves distinct from 'other Muslim or African people' (Hopkins 2006: 270). Seen in this light, Somali females' choice to wear the hijab in the UK should not be straightforwardly be associated with an unyielding attachment to Muslim religiosity but instead, for some, it is a way to be 'visibly Somali'.

Summary

In short, most of the findings in the UK research literature suggest that as a group, Somalis continue to be governed by traditional gender relations that were informed by Islamic principles. These principles govern the genders in different ways as Somali women are expected to take charge of domestic duties and are themselves tightly policed from mixed gender social occasions and dating members from other ethnicities. This view is also

limited as the research analytical lens focuses on ‘how’ Islamic principles govern gender relations but does not take into account the problems that Somalis in the UK might encounter in their attempts to reproduce ‘traditional’ gender relations in the contemporary social landscape of the UK. My study does not claim to offer a counter argument with regard to the salience of ‘traditional’ Somali gender relations because the topic has emerged in some of my male informants’ self-declarations. However, chapter 5 reveals the emerging tensions from the contestation of the reproduction of ‘traditional’ gender relations by my young female informants. Previous studies have tended to not focus on the low-level tensions that emerge from the ways of talking about gender relations. My study also shows how young female SLS’ modes of dressing communicate their Muslim identity but at the same time they also subscribe to modern, liberal notions of gender equality. In short, Somalis in the UK have been mostly pinned with the traditional cultural practices of clan division and orthodox Islamic beliefs which contributed to their alleged problem with integration in the UK. In the following section, I will review some of the chronic problems that have been cemented on Somalis as a group by the UK research literature.

1.5 Somalis in the UK as a ‘problem’ ethnic group

As outlined in section 1, the earliest Somali settlement in the UK was recorded in the 19th century. The research literature has continued to view this group as a collective that face severe problems with adaptation to the host society (Griffiths 2000, Harris, 2004). Some of these challenges include limited success in socioeconomic measures, including high rates of unemployment, and their perceived tendencies to remain insular within their own communities.

1.5.1 Under-employment and pay

One of the contributing factors to the general view that Somalis in the UK are chronically dependent on welfare benefits is their problem with securing gainful employment. Kyambi (2005) reported that ‘Somalis had the lowest levels of employment among the new immigrants at 12.2 per cent, and also the highest proportions of inactivity at 60.2 per cent (Kyambi 2005: 3)’ and more recently, a study in Kensington and Chelsea estimated

that 90% of Somalis living in the borough are unemployed (Kensington and Chelsea Social Council 2011). Contrasted with other migrants, Somalis are also perceived to underperform with regard to unemployment rates, rate of pay and permanence of employment (Harris 2004). According to Change Institute (2009), this problem could be attributed to their Muslim religiosity as

[Somalis] are easily identified as Muslims due to their physical appearance, and since 9/11 men are finding it more difficult to find work. Religious requirements are also said to prevent some men from applying for some jobs, such as driving and security, because of the need to pray during work hours. Some respondents suggested that as there are no real support mechanisms for entrepreneurial men, there is a tendency for many to opt for owning internet cafes and other small businesses, particularly if they are unable to get jobs within institutions in which they feel there is a bias against the wearing of a beard. (Change Institute 2009: 35)

In the above quotation, Change Institute's (2009) report have constructed Somali men as a collective who displays visible signifiers of their religion that identify them as fervent worshippers of Islam who unfailingly practices its rituals. Muslim religiosity is viewed to be problematic and is considered to be a major impediment for Somalis to secure and maintain gainful employment in a relatively secular nation state. In this light, the perceived strict devotion to Islam is viewed to have constrained Somalis' employment prospects in the UK context.

1.5.2 Issues of 'integration'

The other problem is the perception that as a group, Somalis in the UK do not want to integrate with the host society. In her review of the research literature on UK Somalis, Harris (2004) notes that Somalis as a community are viewed as one that 'keeps very much to itself; that it is not interested in 'integrating' or participating in civil society' (Harris 2004: 7). The perceived lack of social integration was also noted by Change Institute (2009). However, instead of attributing this problem to the oft-reported insular nature of Somalis, the report identified the lack of English proficiency to be the

key barrier that prevents many Somalis from fully integrating into UK life. Lack of English language skills has a significant impact on positive social participation, and the lack of access to information is seen as a major barrier for many Somalis (Change Institute 2009: 9).

In this light, the lack of social integration is largely due to Somalis' perceived inability to communicate in English and by extension, make connections with other members of the wider society. However, as section one points out, Somali immigrants in the UK should not be analysed as a bounded entity. An analysis of individual biographies might dispel the notion that *all* Somalis face the problem of communicating in English. As will be amply demonstrated in chapter 4, my informants are highly educated and do not have problems with communicating in English.

In addition, Change Institute (2009) identified the factors that have hindered the integration of Somalis into UK society to be

racial tensions between Somalis and other groups, and discrimination in housing and employment are also perceived to be important factors in hindering integration. The community is also said to encounter considerable prejudice from other ethnic minority communities, including from West African Christians, black Caribbeans, and in some areas of the country respondents reported not being made fully welcome in South Asian mosques. There is a very low level of reporting of discriminatory incidents because of unfamiliarity with UK human rights legislation and a lack of confidence in redress for victims (Change Institute 2009: 9).

In this reading of the problem of integration, the authors identified challenges that Somalis in the UK face in housing, employment, racial and religious discrimination that have contributed to their unwillingness or inability to participate. This insightful analysis points to the problem of racial tensions from diverse ethnic minority groups that have in part, affected the perception of Somalis' lack of integration. In this light, Somalis' exclusion from other ethnic minority groups is responsible for the lack of integration rather than unwillingness to integrate. Importantly, Change Institute (2009) has reported how Somali youth in the UK were the recipients of racism from minority ethnic groups in their everyday lives. However, it did not provide an interpretive analysis of 'why' and 'how' Somalis were subjected to the discourses of exclusion and racism from 'West African Christians and black Caribbeans' (Change 2009: 9). Chapter 7 of this thesis attempts to repair this gap to provide a discussion of SLS' experiences of exclusion from a black social identity.

1.5.3 Claims about intergenerational tensions

There is a general discourse regarding the debilitating effects of intergenerational tensions (Griffiths 1997, Harding et al 2007, Harris 2004) that Somalis were alleged to face in their everyday routines. According to Harding et al (2007), Somali parents' insistence on maintaining traditional cultural practices at home create 'intergenerational conflict' that is perceived to afflict Somali families in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Harding et al (2007) report that some of the informants related instances in which their parents do not accept some of the Western ways of socialising such as 'to go out clubbing and see their friends' (Harding et al 2007: 11). The authors identify this phenomenon as a 'clash between parents' culture and the kids' culture' (Harding et al 2007: 11). Harding et al (2007) also propose that conflicting cultural values between the Somali and British communities may be characterised as 'rural, communal, hierarchical and Islamic versus urban, individual, equitable and secular' (ibid: 5). However, this explanation seems to have generalized the entire Somali community into one that is governed by 'traditional' and rural values and seemed to have overlooked the fact that some members of this community are 'highly educated, urban and cosmopolitan' (Griffiths 1997: 13). Harding et al's (2007) claims are also problematic because they broad brushed all Somali parents as rigidly entrenched in traditional practices. As chapter 5 will show, not ALL SLS adults practice what is considered to be 'traditional' Somali values and while some adult SLS have a desire to reproduce 'traditional' values at my fieldsite, they encounter moments of low level tensions in their attempts to enforce them on young SLS.

1.5.4 Problems of language acquisition and bounded language spaces

Somalia is traditionally an oral society and by adopting the Roman script, the written form only introduced in the 1970s by the Barre regime (Kahin 1997). Kahin (1997) argues that fundamental differences in the phonetic nature of Somali language and English create problems in pronunciation for most first-generation Somali immigrant schoolchildren. Furthermore, he reported that direct questions may present problems for the Somali child to grasp due to 'difficulties in their structural formation' (1997: 59), 'who' and 'which' are commonly erroneously used, for example, 'Which is your teacher?' (ibid: 59). Olden's (1999) study investigated the 'experiences of Somali refugees' from an oral culture in a Western information environment' (Olden 1999: 212) by exploring their modes of

communication. The study claims that Somalis prefer to maintain their oral tradition as it facilitates the exchange of information about employment or education opportunities. As Olden's (1999) and Kahin's (1997) studies were conducted on first generation Somali immigrants in the UK, the abovementioned claims were probably indicative of the problems that their participants had faced in a Western and modern society with a focus on textual modes of communication. More recently, from the field of geography, Sporton et al's (2008) ESRC funded large scale (over 3000 participants) mixed methods study draws on research with Somali young people (aged 11 to 16) in Sheffield. The study explores 'the role of language in connecting or disconnecting young people from others and/or places, the role of language as a situated practice in (re)making identities in local contexts and the possibility that language can change the way that spaces are ordered' (Sporton et al 2008: 376). By focusing on 'two key sites of encounter between different linguistic competences and preferences: the home and the school' (Sporton et al *ibid*: 379), the researchers argue that the former is 'a space produced through the language rules and norms of Somali parents, whereas the school is a space produced through the English language' (*ibid*: 379). These claims appear to have overlooked the possibility that Somalis in the UK speak a variety of languages resulting from their immersion in diverse social realms during their migration trajectories. Second, while some of my adult informants claim to enforce the 'Somali only' rule with regard to home language use, the young informants' self-accounts of the patterns of their language use at home actually suggests otherwise. These accounts of language use among SLS will be explored in chapter 4.

1.5.5 The question of education attainment

Previous studies attribute the roots of Somali pupil underachievement (Demie et al 2007; Rutter, 2004) to a number of factors including lack of understanding of the British education system, difficulties in speaking English, single parent families, overcrowding and racism. Other factors reported include poor school attendance, poverty, the stress of living in large households, interrupted or non-existent prior education, negative teacher perceptions, poor school to home liaison, lack of exposure to written language and lack of role models. Research in Lambeth, a borough in South London also suggested that Somali children were underachieving in schools (Demie et al 2007). One of the main reasons the researchers attributed for this problem is Somali pupils' lack of fluency in

English. The study reported that about 87% of Somali pupils in Lambeth schools were not fluent in English. The study also confirmed that, as highlighted in other studies, underachievement of Somalis in the LAs is also perpetuated by factors such as low expectations, economic deprivation, poor housing, overcrowding, a disrupted or non-existent prior education and parental lack of understanding of the British education system.

Summary

In short, my experiences of interacting with my SLS informants during fieldwork and my friends who identify themselves as Somalis did not match the portrayals given in this section. My adult informants were in gainful employment and /or owners of small businesses and did not exhibit problems with navigating multiple social realms in the UK. These adult SLS did not seem to have problems with severe intergenerational tensions with their children. As a group, they were good at using English and their accounts of their lived experiences in London and elsewhere did not suggest that they are an insular and bounded group who did not ‘integrate’. SLS’ narratives suggest that they mix with people of other ethnicities and my relationship with this group is evidence of their intermingling with other cultures. There is a mixed picture vis-a-vis educational attainment but most of the research literature seemed to have neglected the effects of social class. In other words, some of the Somali working class people that I encountered may lack formal education qualifications but most of my adult informants were highly educated. This group have university degrees and were highly qualified. My study does not dismiss the problems that were reported to afflict Somalis in the UK but they just did not emerge in my data. My thesis attempts to address my dissatisfaction with the claims offered by the research literature by broadening the perspective on the multiple ways in which cultural and traditional identifications are signalled by a small section of Somalis (SLS) in a Southeast London location.

1.6 The unpredictable nature of Somali ethnicities in superdiversity

Sections 1.2 to 1.5 show how a bounded notion of Somali ethnicity has been straightforwardly associated with all members of Somalis in the UK. Given that my summary in section 1.5 shows how the reported particularities that afflict Somalis do not

‘fit’ my experiences of engaging with a small group of SLS, I am offering a different way to conceptualise the nature of Somali ethnicities. Due to the inherently unpredictable nature of ethnicities in contemporary times, a view of Somali ethnicities along with other ethnicities require an understanding of Vertovec’s (2007) notion of superdiversity. In reflecting on the intensification of the diverse nature of ethnicities and the complex patterns of migration in contemporary times, Vertovec (2007) points out that

observing ethnicity or country of origin (the two often, and confusingly, being used interchangeably) provides a misleading, one-dimensional appreciation of contemporary diversity. Over the past ten years, the nature of immigration to Britain has brought with it a transformative ‘diversification of diversity’ (cf. Hollinger 1995, Martiniello 2004) not just in terms of bringing more ethnicities and countries of origin, but also with respect to a multiplication of significant variables that affect where, how and with whom people live. In the last decade, the proliferation and mutually conditioning effects of additional variables shows that it is not enough to see diversity only in terms of ethnicity, as is regularly the case both in social science and the wider public sphere. Such additional variables include differential immigration statuses and their concomitant entitlements and restrictions of rights, divergent labour market experiences, discrete gender and age profiles, patterns of spatial distribution, and mixed local area responses by service providers and residents. Rarely are these factors described side by side. The interplay of these factors is what is meant here, in summary fashion, by the notion of ‘super-diversity’. (Vertovec 2007: 3)

Vertovec’s (2007) articulations in the lengthy quote above illuminate my study’s attempt to grasp at an understanding of the diverse nature of Somali ethnicities. Crucially, Vertovec (2007) states the need to move from a narrow unidimensional conceptualisation of ethnicities to reflect the diverse and multiple variables contained within individual biographies. In this light, the traditional categorisations of ‘migrant’ and its accompanying ‘sociocultural features have disappeared’ (Blommaert and Rampton 2011:1) due to the exponential increase in the ‘categories of migrants, not only in terms of nationality, ethnicity, language, and religion’ (ibid). In my encounters with people of Somali descent in London, I found that it is impossible to predict the ethnic formation of individuals that I have come to know. They have different biographical trajectories, country of origin, different migration transits, different linguistic repertoires and different ways of maintaining connections with other diasporic Somalis. The specificities of Somalis’ migration trajectories have not been investigated sufficiently and by extension, highlights the problematic conceptualisations of Somali ethnicities in some of the UK research literature. As such, Vertovec’s (ibid) notion of ethnicities and ethnic stances in superdiversity fits the people of Somali descent that I have encountered.

In this section, I have argued that the Somali diaspora in the UK should not be viewed as a homogenous entity, and that the nature of Somali ethnicities must be understood in relation to the multiple diasporic experiences and migration trajectories to the UK. Secondly, I am arguing that Somali ethnicities consists of contingent and unpredictable practices among groups of Somalis in the UK. The dominant part of the UK research literature has viewed Somali ethnicities through the lens of what Gilroy (1993b) terms 'ethnic absolutism'. He argues that ethnic absolutism functions as a

reductive, essentialist understanding of ethnic and national difference which operates through an absolute sense of culture so powerful that it is capable of separating people off from each other and diverting them into social and historical locations that are understood to be mutually impermeable and incommensurable (Gilroy 1993b: 65)

Gilroy's articulations above argue for the need for this study to shift from essentialist notions of ethnic and national differences that has construed Somalis in the UK as a insular group who is deeply rooted by an absolute sense of cultural practices that are disconnected from the host society. My thesis rejects the notion that Somali ethnicities could be reduced to a set of essences impermeable to the daily social encounters with the multi-ethnic people in Somalis' places of residence in the UK. As I have highlighted in the vignette on page 11, the utterance '*It's tribal innit*' provides evidence of Aweys's appropriation of local ways of speaking which to an extent, is suggestive of his social interactions with the people who live in his locality. The utterance 'It's tribal innit' also pointed to a culture that is hybridised, a concept developed by Stuart Hall (1992), an oft quoted and prominent figure in the field of cultural studies. Hall (1992) argues for an understanding of identity formations which

cut across and intersect natural frontiers... Such people retain strong links with their places of origin and their traditions, but they are not without the illusion of a return to the past. They are obliged to come to terms with the new cultures they inhabit, without simply assimilating to them and losing their identities completely. They bear upon them the traces of the particular cultures, traditions, languages and histories by which they are shaped. The difference is that they are not and will never be unified in the old sense, because they are the product of several interlocking histories and cultures, belong at one and the same time to several 'homes' (and to no one particular home)... people belonging to such cultures of hybridity have had to renounce the dream or ambition of rediscovering any kind of "lost" cultural purity, or ethnic absolutism... They are the new diasporas created by post-colonial migrations... They must learn to inhabit at least two identities, to speak two cultural languages, to translate and negotiate between them (Hall 1992: 310).

My thesis investigates how the nature of Somali ethnicities might mean in the light of Hall's (1992) articulation of cultures hybridity above. By taking Hall's (1992) and Gilroy's (1993b) arguments as the study's guiding principles, it attempts to investigate the formation of emergent Somali ethnicities in an urban London setting. In short, instead of fixating on the reductive, essentialist and spectacular headline notions of what Somali ethnicity might mean, it looks at the unpredictability of Somali ethnicities. I am arguing in this thesis that people of Somali descent growing and working in a specific location in South London cannot have their cultural practices uninfluenced by the locality. The cultural practices of SLS are a combination of the traditional practices that are marked 'Somali', traditional practices that morph into modern Somali marked together with practices that are forged in South London resulting from living and interacting with people of diverse ethnicities.

1.6.1 Language and Somali ethnicities

Studies of Somali ethnicities which refer to questions of language tend to frame them in relation to the standard language ideology about standard English and standard Somali. The definition of languages is not without its complexities and to some extent, the nascence of modern Western European nation states is credited with the creation of the notion of 'languages' and languages are imagined to be bounded entities associated with nationhood and national identities (Heller 2007). This association of 'one country' with 'one language' and 'one people' is the foundation on which the imagination of the modern nation-state is built upon. However, the notion of 'one country with one language and one people' is problematic in the study of Somali ethnicities in the UK. Further, the homogeneity perspective with regard to place of origin and language is challenged in chapter 4 as my informants' have diverse places of origin and migratory transits that have in part, shaped their linguistic repertoires. Hence, I argue that additional insights can be gained by investigating what linguistic resources my research informants choose to deploy in specific circumstances as a marker of ethnicity (see chapter 6). Chapter 6 shows how for the most part, SLS communicate in English but at certain moments, certain linguistic features were deployed as a marker of group solidarity. Further, my informants' self-references to 'Somali' language is embedded with particular meanings. At this juncture, the discussion hitherto in this section stresses that traditional assumption of ethnicities as bounded units that are linked with specific languages is inherently

problematic in superdiversity. In this light, I argue that a nuanced understanding of the nature of Somali ethnicities in the UK requires an ethnographically informed approach with a focus on the observed practices, discourse and communicative habits in order to gain purchase on a view of the emergent and localised ethnic particularities.

1.7 Ethnicity and Somali diaspora

Another important aspect that links with the question of superdiversity and trajectories that I referred to in section 1.6, because of recent economic, political and social history and patterns of migration, people from Somalia have been scattered all over the world especially in Europe. Because of this phenomenon, my research informants tended to have active connections and relations with other Somalis in places such as the Netherlands, Sweden and Canada etc (see chapter 4). Although my thesis is focused on the practices and discourses of Somali ethnicity in a specific locality, an important aspect in the understanding of Somali ethnicities is its members' connections with the global diaspora. This is important because ethnicities in the diaspora frame, is a matter of inflections, stances and idiom. For example, some of my informants were born in Dubai, moved to the Netherlands before arriving in London. In this light, traditional conceptualisations of ethnicity do not encapsulate the unpredictable nature of Somali ethnicities in the UK. Hence, this study views the active Somali diaspora as a 'category of practice' (Brubaker 2005: 12). According to Brubaker (2005), a way to overcome the problem of groupism is to

think of diaspora not in substantialist terms as a bounded identity, but rather as an idiom, a stance, a claim. We should think of diaspora in the first instance as a *category of practice*- and only then ask whether, and how, it can fruitfully be used as a category of analysis. As a category of practice, 'diaspora' is used to make claims, to articulate projects, to formulate expectations, to mobilize energies, to appeal to loyalties. It often carries a strong normative charge. It does not so much describe the world as seek to remake it. As idiom, stance and claim, diaspora is a way of formulating the identities and loyalties of a population (Brubaker 2005:12).

Brubaker's quote provides a helpful perspective in that the Somali diaspora should not be viewed as a bounded identity but rather as a stance or a claim. In a similar vein Sökefeld, in the attempt to '[counter] essentialist concepts of diaspora that reify notions of

belonging and the “roots” of migrants in places of origin’ (2006:265), interprets diasporas as the outcome of specific processes and practices of identity building. He argues that

sentiments of belonging, attachment to a home and ideas of a place of origin [i.e. the key diaspora features] do not constitute the “substance” from which diasporas – like other identity groups – are made [it is the] discursive constructions of imagined [transnationally dispersed] communities’ (Sökefeld 2006:267).

Sökefeld’s (2006) view of diaspora enables us to imagine or project a community among a dispersed, cross-border population. Both Brubaker’s and Sökefeld’s definitions of diaspora underline the need to think of diaspora as a dynamic process rather than a *fait accompli*. Importantly, Brubaker (2005) and Sökefeld’s (2006) conceptualizations of diaspora as a process allows some flexibility as the analytical lens focuses on the analysis of its members’ diasporic practices instead of presupposing the salience of their traditional homeland practices. This view of diaspora focuses on the ways in which the narratives of dispersal, ties to the homeland and salient boundaries are articulated. The important insights in the analysis of diaspora espoused by Brubaker (2005) and Sökefeld (2006) provide a very useful understanding of the concept of diaspora for my study of SLS ethnicities. Further, Mitchell (1997) argues that diaspora should be viewed as located and embedded in specific histories. As I have outlined in section 1, the settlement of Somalis in the UK during the 1980s were identified as originating from Somaliland as opposed to the more recent wave post 1990 who come from South Somalia. This recognition is crucial in the analysis of the formation of Somali ethnicities. As Ni Laoire (2003) argues, the analysis of diasporas

requires understanding their location in geographical, historical and material processes. This means that the complexity, specificity and contested nature of diasporic experiences are not lost (Ni Laoire, 2003: 279).

The complexity, specificity and contested nature of diasporic experiences among my focal informants underpins my thesis as it is tightly focused on the enactment and ways of talking about Somali ethnicities among a small group of people with diasporic connections to a specific location in Somaliland. It examines the relationship between place of origin, individual migration trajectory and their current place of residence to capture the nature of Somali ethnicities in South London. To sum up, this study’s understanding of active Somali diasporas draws on insights offered by Brubaker (2005), Sökefeld (2006), Mitchell (1997) and Ni Laoire (2003), and I have taken particular care

to be sensitive to the idioms, stances, practices and claims that have been declared by SLS in the formulation of their identities.

Conclusion

This chapter has been driven by two objectives. The first is to offer an understanding of the nature of Somali ethnicity as depicted by the research literature. This body of work, as evaluated in this chapter, has in the main essentialised Somalis in the UK as an insular, bounded group who share a set of traditional cultural practices and who are impervious to the effects of life in a relatively secular Western society. As sections 1.2 to 1.5 have shown, existing research portrays UK Somalis as being tightly connected to a fixed, deep attachment to traditional Somali customs and cultural practices such as (i) clan affiliation (Griffiths 2002, McBride 2001, Harris 2004), (ii) Muslim religiosity (Harris 2004, Change 2007) (iii) observance of traditional gender relations and modes of dress (Harding et al 2007, Phillips-Mundy 2013, Atubo & Batterbury 2001). Somalis in the UK have also been mostly portrayed as a ‘problem’ ethnic group that are marked by their chronic inability to obtain gainful employment (Change 2007, Jordan 2001), suffer from severe and disabling inter-generational differences (Harding et al 2007) and problems with education attainment due in part, to the difficulties with using English (Demie et al 2007). Although these studies have provided some insights into the nature of Somali ethnicities in the UK, an important question remains unanswered. How does a group of people who are embedded in superdiverse urban contexts remain insular and steadfastly maintain a set of traditional Somali cultural practices? This thesis does not refute the salience of a set of Somali ‘traditions’, but it attempts to discover *how* and *what* cultural practices and discourses were enacted and reproduced. Hence, this thesis argues that an ethnographic account with a focus on my key informants’ observed practices, self-declarations and communicative habits that signals their alignment with clan, allegiances to Islam and ‘traditional’ Somali gender relations is required to shade a more precise view of the nature of Somali ethnicities at a specific site. My thesis argues that categories such as clan and religion are referenced in a range of ways that are not recorded by the existing literature. My study also argues that the research literature has neglected to investigate the communicative habits that convey the nature of Somali ethnicities in subtle and indirect ways. Crucially, the UK Somali research literature hitherto has neglected to investigate

the specificities of the locality in the formation of Somali ethnicities in contemporary times. The second aim of this chapter is to foreground my argument that the homogeneity perspective of Somalis in the UK is inherently problematic in contemporary UK. I have argued that traditional conceptualisations of ethnicities do not provide the analytical lens to study the unpredictable nature of Somali ethnicities in superdiversity. The notion of the active Somali diaspora in the conditions of superdiversity also necessitates an ethnographic approach to the study of Somali ethnicities. To provide a more nuanced account of the nature of Somali ethnicities in superdiversity, this thesis takes an ethnographically informed approach to an investigation of individual biographical trajectories, observed cultural practices and ways of talking among a small group of people who self-identify as Somali in a specific locality. Chapter 2 provides my rationale for employing the ethnographic approach to researching ethnicities and discusses the fieldwork process, research instruments and a reflective account of my presence in the research site.

Chapter 2: Researching local Somali ethnicities

Introduction

I have already set out in the Introduction and Chapter One that the primary concern of this thesis is to investigate the formation of Somali ethnicities among a small group of South Londoners of Somali descent (SLS) at a specific research site. Given this aim, the research questions are concerned with SLS' self-identifications within a range of social categories in accounts of their lived experiences. Here, the purpose is to set out the methodological framework for this research and to present and justify the methods that have been used. In the forthcoming sections, I first review a selection of the methodological approaches that have already been deployed by research studies on Somalis in the UK over the preceding 30 years. I then show how a selection of ethnographic studies conducted in London informs this study. After which I provide an account of the key ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpin my study and how the nature of this thesis requires a research design grounded on ethnographic principles in the description and analysis of the practices and discourses of Somali ethnicities. Subsequently, I provide the reader with the outline of the research design, including an account of the process of negotiating entry and recruiting research participants and the data collection methods adopted. Further, I give a reflective account of my position as a researcher and teacher during the research process and finally, show how a theoretical framework informed by the ethnography of speaking facilitates the discussion and interpretation of my dataset.

2.1 Existing research approaches on Somalis in the UK

Chapter one, with some notable exceptions, critiques the claims of a range of research studies on Somalis in the UK which I argue, have contributed to an essentialised stereotype purportedly indicative of the entire group. I have already stated in the introduction that these images do not reflect my long-term experiences of engaging with a small group of Somalis in London. As such, this chapter seeks to understand the claims about Somalis in the UK that are circulated by such studies, by assessing the research agenda and methodological approaches used by most of the researchers.

In a report commissioned by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, Harding et al. (2007), investigated the issue of 'intergenerational conflict' that is purported to cause tensions in Somali families that live in the area. The researchers collected data for this report by employing two Somali speaking fieldworkers to conduct focus group and one to one interviews with separate cohorts of 11 Somali parents and 11 young people. Focus group interviews were tightly structured on the themes of on family values and relations, friendships and living in Tower Hamlets. Focus group interviews were followed by one to one interviews with 5 young people and 4 parents. In addition, structured individual interviews were conducted with a focus on the research themes of 'intergenerational conflict', 'family breakdown', 'reconstructions of motherhood', 'shared concerns', and 'what can be done' (Harding et al *ibid*: 4). According to the authors, this tight focus is necessary due to limited funds and the interviews were 'shorter and less detailed' (*ibid*: 10) than originally designed. This immediately raises concerns about what is left out – in terms of unexplored matters of real concern- and why certain issues are perceived to be more important. Furthermore, the participants were interviewed only on a single occasion and the interview questions were structured by a specific focus on the research themes. Crucially, Harding et al's (2007) study did not allow for its participants to share aspects of their lived experiences that might be of importance.

In a UK government funded report, Demie et al (2007) focused on the achievement of Somali schoolchildren in ten London schools in the boroughs of Lambeth, Camden, Newham, Haringey, Wandsworth and Barnet. The research was conducted to investigate the challenges that the schools have faced in trying to accommodate students from asylum families. The authors' rationale behind this study lies in their critique of quantitative research tools employed by previous government reports that broad brushed all schoolchildren of African descent into a single category resulting in the neglect of the needs of Somali schoolchildren. The methodological framework used by this report includes 'statistical patterns of performance' (Demie et al 2007: 8) analysis of the schools' results in examinations followed by focus groups and parent, pupil, teacher and community group interviews and case studies and observations of these schools. Although the report acknowledged differences with regard to their Somali participants' diverse migration trajectories and linguistic backgrounds, these factors were not sufficiently interrogated in the analyses of Somali schoolchildren's achievement in

schools. Further, while the report acknowledged a small section of high achievers among Somali schoolchildren, the results of the statistical analysis provided the average scores of the participants sampled and the resultant effect is a view that constructs all Somali schoolchildren as low achievers.

Hopkins (2006) used an oral history approach to collecting data in London and Toronto for her comparative study. Her ultimate aim was ‘for the women to talk about what was important to them, not what was important to me, in relation to their resettlement’ (Hopkins 2006: 66). Although Hopkins’s (2006) aim was to elicit matters of concern to the women in her study, her primary focus was on their experiences of resettlement. Hopkins (ibid) additionally discussed the challenges that she faced in trying to ensure her participants stay on topic whilst conducting the semi-structured interviews and that ‘on a few occasions I re-introduced a topic which had been passed over, just to see the result, only for the topic to be passed over again as the woman returned to a subject which was of concern to her at that moment’ (ibid: 66). Viewed in this light, Hopkins (2006) crucially failed to explore the matters that concern her participants due to the tight focus of her research topic.

Work by Sporton et al (2008) explored how young Somalis identities and affiliations are shaped by their histories of mobility and their experiences of home, school and community life in the UK. The research agenda then is to examine ‘the implications of these experiences for their social integration’. The researchers administered a large-scale survey of over 3000 pupils of various backgrounds as a means to compare Somali children’s’ affiliations and identity practices with children of other minority ethnic descent and white children. The researchers asked the participants to ‘select a particular category that best described their ethnicity – the results are therefore based on young people’s self-reporting of their identities’ (Sporton et al 2008: 378). The second stage of the research included ‘participant observation in Somali community spaces, such as homework clubs; semi structured interviews with key stakeholders (e.g. representatives from the local asylum team, various Somali community projects etc.) about the broader contextual issues that may shape young people’s everyday lives; and interviews with Somali children and their parents, exploring their particular histories of mobility and

understandings of their own identities (including discussions about language use, dress etc.)' (Sporton et al 2008: 378). This study has importantly acknowledged the importance of investigating their participants' migration trajectories which the authors argue, shape their emerging identifications. Sporton et al's (2008) study has also provided useful insights with regard to the problem of identification among Somali young people in the UK. However, as noted earlier, the research relied on the respondents' self-report of their ethnic identifications, which were based on 'the categories used in the questionnaire are those used by the UK Office for National Statistics in government censuses and surveys and were adapted to include categories representing the major ethnic groupings resident in Sheffield' (Sporton et al, 378). In line with the above the ONS questionnaire design, ethnicity is categorized as bounded entities such as 'White British', Pakistani, Yemeni and Somali', which meant that these questionnaires were not able to fully show how young Somali people might signal their identifications within a range of categories in small indirect ways.

2.1.1 Limitations of 'problem oriented' research

These studies and methods employed in them (Demie, Lewis and Mclean 2007, 2008, Harding et al 2005 and Hopkins 2006) range from the administration of fixed pre-coded questionnaires, written or recorded, through various combinations of open-ended questioning to structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews. This selection of studies with their accompanying methods of investigation provide a general backdrop of what is said about the Somali refugee experience in the UK. In fact, most of what is known about Somalis in the public domain is in the form of public-funded reports. This itself is likely to have an effect on the way the community is perceived as the agenda of publicly funded research is to identify the challenges that Somalis in the UK are perceived to face and to suggest solutions (Demie, Lewis and Mclean 2007, 2008, Harding et al 2007, Patel, Wright and Gammampila 2005). These studies present Somalis in terms of the obstacles they face, as 'problems', or victims of circumstance. One does not deny the importance of such reports as the research agenda is probably necessary to investigate and try to solve the challenges faced by newly arrived Somali immigrants but problem-oriented research such as this has somewhat construed Somalis as passive supplicants of the welfare state (Harris 2004).

2.1.2 Unpublished studies and difficulties inherent in the research

The selection of unpublished studies (Ali 2001, Hopkins 2006, Mohamed 2011, Sakyiwah 2012, Brinkhurst 2012, Liberatore 2013) reviewed in Chapter One used semi structured interviews to collect data although there are some differences in their methodological approaches. Ali (2001) for example, ‘used certain elements of ethnography in [her] approach, especially with regards to descriptions of settings and what the women said’ (2001: 56). However, due to the problems she faced in arranging to meet her participants, her data was collected in one sitting and she was unable to conduct observations due to problems with gaining access to her participants. Mohamed’s (2011) longitudinal study was conducted over a period of ten years and he conducted semi structured interviews to ‘explore in depth and in detail the opinions, feelings, emotions and experiences of these young adults and their parents’ (2011: 98). Sakyiwah (2012) situates her research within a ‘feminist methodological tradition which prioritises women’s realities and seeks to deconstruct dominant discourses about women’s experiences’ (2012: 58). She conducted single interviews with her participants. Brinkhurst’s (2012) study took the ethnomusicology approach to research and data collection, consisting of semi-structured interviews.

The preceding subsections have commented on studies with approaches ranging from qualitative case studies with focus group and individual interviews (Harding et al 2004, Hopkins 2006, Mohamed 2011, Sakyiwah 2012), studies with ethnographic sensibilities based on semi-structured interviews (Ali 2001, Brinkhurst 2012) to mixed method approaches (Demie et al 2007, Sporton et al 2008). In general, the findings of the studies above were based on an analysis of questionnaires and single semi-structured interviews conducted on each participant. In short, the depiction of Somalis in the UK by the reviewed studies tend to focus on the ‘spectacular’ topics that highlight certain cultural practices of the Somali diaspora. This depiction, it may be argued, is due to the methodological approaches undertaken by the previous researchers. Large scale survey questionnaires and even qualitative interviews may produce data that simply replicate official discourses and are not reflections of everyday life. It might be worthwhile then, to remind ourselves that Hymes (1981) alerts us to the problem with trying to elicit

the small portion of cultural behavior that people can be expected to report or describe, when asked, and the much smaller portion that an average person can be expected to manifest by doing on demand (1981: 84).

Hymes's (1981) observation above is particularly salient with regard to the research methods deployed in the studies above. It is difficult for the participants in the studies above to report their self-identifications or views on particular topics during a single semi-structured interview.

2.1.3 Ethnographic studies of UK Somalis

This review will now consider the approach deployed by Griffiths (2002) and Liberatore (2013), whose studies are based on substantial ethnographic claims. Griffiths' (1997, 1999, 2002) research focuses on the older settlement of Somalis in Tower Hamlets and makes clear that his interest is in 'the continuing significance of clan identities for Somalis in London' (2002: 94). The 'core sample' of this study consists of six group interviews with between three and six individuals per group and ten in-depth individual interviews. In total eleven women were interviewed and 22 men. The interview questions focused on biographical detail, migration details, networks and settlement, the role of community associations as related by his respondents. Griffiths (1999, 2002) visited a number of youth clubs, schools and colleges to conduct multiple interviews with his informants over the period of one year. Griffiths's study yielded some interesting findings that I have acknowledged in Chapter One and more importantly, has opened up some space for ethnographic research on this community. However, the same study reported most of his informants' narratives verbatim and he also did not observe how his informant's social identities were enacted due to a lack of a period of sustained observation of their practices.

More recently, Liberatore's (2013) study of the nature of Somali females' religious allegiances to Islam in London is based on strong ethnographic claims. She followed a group of adult female Somalis across multiple sites in London over a period of about 2 years. In addition to her participant observation with her informants, Liberatore (2013) also conducted multiple narrative interviews on a group of 1st and second generation female Somali informants over a sustained period. Liberatore's work provided important insights to offer a view of the fluid nature of her informants' performance of piety. However, it is tightly focused on the topic of piety and the study is limited to female

Somalis due to Liberatore's problem with gaining access to male participants. In addition, she was not concerned with the enactment of Somali ethnicities beyond the role of Islam.

Griffiths (1999, 2002) and Liberatore's (2013) work were based on significant ethnographic claims but even so, their studies were constrained by specific cultural practices of their participants as the points of departure. Having deliberated the research methods deployed by the studies in this section, the following reviews a selection of studies on ethnicities that were rooted in ethnographic sensibilities.

2.2 Some important ethnographic research on ethnicities in the UK

This section reviews a selection of important studies that used ethnographic methods to research urban ethnicities. Significantly, this selection of studies produced results which challenged dominant notions of fixed ethnic groups within impermeable ethnic silos. Firstly, the ethnographic research by Hewitt (1986) in South London used empirical evidence to show how young blacks and whites who were viewed to be completely hostile to each other created and maintained inter-ethnic friendship groups. By collecting data using radio microphones worn by 30 young people during their lunch breaks, at three schools, youth clubs and on the street, he demonstrated how the language use of his black and white adolescents symbolised the significance of these inter-ethnic friendships.

Further significant work in South London was conducted by Back (1996) in his study of urban ethnicities. As a resident of the area, Back (1996) used taped interviews and his observations as the empirical basis for his claims. Due to the demographics of the locality during the early 1990s, the primary concern of his work was mostly focused on young black people of Caribbean descent, whites, Vietnamese and South Asian descent. In somewhat similar vein with Hewitt's (1986) study, Back's (1996) also shows how inter-ethnic friendship groups were maintained and provided some examples of local discourses of ethnicities that were transmitted by his informants.

In his study of young people in London, Harris (2006) showed how an ethnographically informed research of everyday language use is able to reveal the formation of 'new ethnicities' in an empirically grounded way among a group of British Asian adolescents. As opposed to the dominant view of young people of South Asian descent as tightly fixed to a set of traditional cultural practices, a rather more dynamic and complex picture of

‘new ethnicities’ and ‘cultures of hybridity’ were presented by Harris’s (2006) ethnographic study. His study employed language survey questionnaires, written accounts, individual conversational interviews, and self-made audio tapes to highlight the voices and self-representations of his participants.

Another study that has provided insights for my project is Harris and Rampton’s (2009) ethnographic study of the linguistic practices among multi-ethnic peers in an urban secondary school. For them, ethnicity should be viewed as a resource with some flexibility, with which individuals and groups use in traversing social boundaries, aligning themselves with particular groups and dis-aligning from others. The research followed nine adolescents (5F, 4M) over two years in a London secondary school which involved participant-observation, interviews, radio-microphone recording (180 hours) and playback interviews focusing on the radio-mic data. By means of a sophisticated interpretation of the participants’ naturally occurring speech, the study claims that what might be construed as racist statements by the participants is actually more complex.

In short, the selected items of research above were able to provide a nuanced account of young people’s identifications with a range of social categories by taking an ethnographic approach. These insights are important for my thesis as it attempts to show the ‘unbounded’ nature of Somali ethnicities among my key research informants. My informants do not belong to an insular group that is impervious to the effects of living with people of diverse ethnicities in their places of residence.

2.3 The importance of the ethnographic element in my research

This section discusses the underlying principles that guide my research approach. As I have already pointed out, most of the limitations with problem-oriented research on the Somali diaspora tended to ignore the emergent cultural formations of their research subjects. Some of these limitations could be mediated by research grounded on ethnographic sensibilities as Hymes (1996) argues,

each of us speaks (and writes) in a context of understandings and taken-for-granted conventions, a network of implications and form. If it matters to get these right, observation, asking, comparison, are needed – in short, ethnography (1996: xi).

Informed by Hymes's insights above, this study focuses on the lived experiences of my informants. This venture requires an understanding of localised and emergent meanings of Somali ethnicities informed by an ethnographic approach which according to Hymes (1996), provides a useful way to study emergent ethnic particularities as it is the 'cumulative coming to grips with local meanings and emergent configurations' (Hymes 1996: x). Duranti (1997) explains that ethnography involves the

written description of the social organization, social activities, symbolic and material resources, and interpretive practices characteristic of a particular group of people' (1997: 84).

As such, ethnography is at once a research methodology, a set of fieldwork techniques, most prominently participant observation, a research product, and a reflexive account of social life that prioritizes participants' perspectives. The insights provided by Hymes (1996) and Duranti (1997) in this section articulate the interpretive and hypothetical nature of ethnography.

From the methodological perspective, Bloome and Green (in Harris 2006) propose that 'doing ethnography' entails conducting a longitudinal study of the focal group utilizing participant observation and/or immersing in this group and sharing their life experiences across differing social and institutional contexts. By 'adopting an ethnographic perspective' in general, studies tend to focus on a smaller number of 'specific aspects of everyday life and social practices of a group of people' and finally, 'using ethnographic tools' (Bloome and Green in Harris 2006: 20), are referred to the techniques used in these studies. These tools include 'participant observation, open-ended interviews, elicitation of life histories and keeping field notes' (Bloome and Green in Harris *ibid*). So, where is my project situated in Bloome and Green's tripartite distinction?

Despite engaging with a section of SLS over a period of ten years, I am not suggesting that my research is a fully-fledged ethnographic study in traditional anthropological terms. Fieldwork was conducted over a period of 18 months in a specific location. I did not live in the locality in which my informants reside, nor am I privy to the everyday lives of SLS across differing social and institutional contexts. I did not attempt to learn and communicate with my informants in a Somali language, but I have been attuned to certain communicative habits that were used at my fieldsite. In addition to my data collection, I have participated in social events such as community association meetings, parent-teacher

meetings at the community school and birthday and religious celebrations. These occasions were supplemented by my social encounters with some of the adult informants at coffee shops and restaurants. I argue that the cumulative experiences of engagement with a small group of SLS have cultivated my insights on the possible ways that Somali ethnicities might be understood. Hence, I argue that this thesis constitutes a study that posits itself between ‘doing ethnography’ and one that adopts an ethnographic perspective in my study of a small group of SLS in a specific location. While my study of a small group of SLS’ ethnic identifications cannot be generalised as indicative of the nature of Somali ethnicities in the UK, Firth (1951) argues that small groups are crucial in that they are

the smallest types of co-operative unit in society, the bricks from which the community fabric is built... Such primary groups are socially vital, [they provide] opportunities of feeling secure amid group comfort, of exercising power over others, of showing skill and petty inventiveness in adapting things to immediate group needs, in getting gratifications of a moral kind, through the display of love and self-sacrifice (Firth 1951: 44).

Firth’s (ibid) quotation shows the salience of investigating small groups of Somalis in any study of the nature of UK Somali ethnicities. Small groups are socially vital and, in this regard,, although my study of a primary group of SLS was conducted in a specific locale, it is an important ‘brick’ from which the UK Somali community fabric is built.

2.4 The importance of the linguistic element in my research

In the previous section I provided an understanding of what constitutes ‘ethnography’ and how the key principles of this project are deeply embedded in the ‘ethnographic perspective’. At this juncture, it might be necessary to provide the reader with this study’s perspective on the importance of researching my participants’ ways of talking. Firstly, this thesis focuses on the ways SLS communicate their alignment with a range of social categories by their ways of speaking about the social and cultural worlds that they live in. As such, I followed Hymes’s (1964) advocacy for a descriptive science that focuses the linguistic code(s), participants, the situated event, a channel, a setting, a form or shape to the utterance being transmitted (Hymes 1964: 13). Drawing on Hymes’s ethnography of

speaking grid, Cameron (2001) proposes that central to this framework is the analysis of the speech event. Cameron (2001) argues that

speech events have a set of components, characteristics which the analyst needs to look at in order to produce satisfactory description of any particular speech event ... without such a framework you may miss important things, or interpret things in terms of categories that used by your own society rather than the one you are observing. Hymes's grid is meant to be both comprehensive and applicable to any community's ways of speaking (Cameron 2001: 56-57).

As researcher observing the cultural practices and speech events of my informants, the ethnography of speaking framework has guided this study's analysis of the dataset. As such, the descriptions of episodes of SLS' discursive practices were guided by the speaking grid and the components of the speech event such as type of setting, number and types of participants and so on, was elucidated with care. However, Cameron also warns against forcing the data into the components if they don't 'fit' and it might be more fruitful to think about why they don't fit. Therefore, the framework was used as an exploratory tool to be systematic in the description of speech events rather than a 'recipe to make an analysis of the speech event, take these ingredients and add to the pot in this order' (Cameron *ibid*: 57). For Cameron (2001), the careful interpretation of the

significance of a particular speech event involves relating its characteristics to a broader range of cultural beliefs, practices and values – both those relating directly and specifically to language and those relating to other things, such as the culture's view of what a 'good person' is, or its attitudes towards emotion or conflict (Cameron *ibid*: 57).

Informed by Cameron's (2001) position, my study views SLS' ways of talking as indicative of their views on how an exemplary member should behave, their attachments to particular cultural practices and their self-positionings in relation to the local practices and discourses in the dense and ethnically diverse locales in which they reside. Cameron's (2001) advice for working with spoken discourse in social research is also a fruitful way to analyse the multiple accounts or contradictions that have emerged from my informants' talk. Instead of looking at these incidents as flaws in the data, Cameron argues that multiple social voices or discourses are available for the members of any given community. As such, my informants at times contradictory accounts were evidence of the competing discourses that are available and 'by speaking in more than one voice', my informants are 'providing evidence of their multiple ways of understanding the world'

(Cameron 2001: 157). As I will show in chapters 5 to 7, particular care has been paid to my descriptions of the nature of the situated events. This exercise, whilst difficult, has been worthwhile in my descriptions and analyses of the ways my informants communicate their identifications. Chapter 6 for example, shows how a careful description of the speech events of greeting and leave taking were structured by the dynamics of the participants' status within the group.

2.5 My stance as an ethnographic researcher

Blommaert (2006) explains that 'ethnography attributes (and has to attribute) great importance to the history of what is commonly seen as 'data': the whole process of gathering and moulding knowledge is part of that knowledge' (Blommaert 2006: 6). In this light, knowledge construction is a process, and researcher self-reflexivity is crucial in ethnographic writing. At the completion of fieldwork, the ethnographer might encounter challenges pertaining to data analysis, interpretation and reportage. Warning against 'a slide into self-indulgent solipsism', authorial reflexivity is seen as a 'pragmatic effort to refine our analytic sensitivity by foregrounding the encounter of different systems of knowledge and selfhood between researcher and hosts' (Peterson 2003: 10). My response, then, is to adopt the stance that my data is a 'cooperatively evolved text' that centralises discourse over universal truths; with a priority on 'dialogues not monologue' and a particular emphasis on collaboration over the musings of a 'transcendental observer' (Clifford, 1986: 125). A part of my reflexivity as an ethnographic researcher was to consider the variables that might impact upon my analysis. As a starting point, I acknowledge that my attempt to understand the subjectivities of my informants will have been affected by my own subjectivities which in turn, informs my perceptions of the research subjects' accounts of their lived experiences. I also acknowledge that my relationships and encounters with my informants over a prolonged period of time will also have informed and influenced those subjectivities. In this light, reflexivity may be viewed as the ways I reveal my roles, perceptions, reflect on the problems that I have faced during the research procedure, interpretation and representation of the data but more crucially, that I am a part of the social reality of this study.

For this study, four main research roles were adopted. As a participant/observer, I taught about 35 GCSE English classes to a group of 7 students, I also contributed to teaching other classes to other age groups when required. These experiences were supplemented by my participation in meetings with the parents and other staff members. Second, I was also an observer/participant in the classrooms that the adult SLS taught in, where I watched the unfolding interactions and made fieldnotes of the encounters. Thirdly, I also adopted the role of a general observer of the typical interactions among the participants at the school when I was not teaching. Finally, I also assumed the role as an interviewer when I taped casual conversational and retrospective interviews with all ten of my informants.

One way to refine the study's analytic sensitivity was to attempt to reconstruct what Ventakesh terms 'the status and identity of the researcher from the informants' point of view' (Ventakesh 2002: 92). The reconstruction here is an exercise in reflexive science and Ventakesh (2002) argues that since

relations between fieldworker and informant form a constitutive part of ethnographic research, then reconstructing the informants' point of view-in this case the perceptions of the fieldworker and the research initiative-can aid the researcher in the more general objective of determining patterns of structure and meaning among individual, group and/or community under study (Ventakesh 2002: 92).

I am sympathetic to Ventakesh's argument above with regard to how my informants perceived me as the fieldworker and my research initiative. The following episodes provide examples of how some of the participants (a teaching assistant and some students) might have viewed my presence at the site:

Example 1: Sagal, the new teaching assistant then came over to talk to me and asked if I was the new Maths teacher. When I told her that I teach English she raised her eyebrows sceptically and said 'ENGLISH?' (Fieldnotes 05/10/13).

Example 2: Fatima's sister (in year 9) tapped me on the shoulder and asked if I have a brother that teaches Science in a local school and I said no. 'Really? He looks just like you and he's Chinese and really good at Maths and Science'. 'Then I'm sure he's not my brother as I'm really bad at Maths and Science', I responded.

‘But *Macaalin* (teacher in Somali), all Chinese people are good at Maths!’ she replied. (Fieldnotes 12/10/13)

Example 3: ‘*Macaalin*, do you own this school?’ a boy asked and when I said no, he didn’t seem convinced and said, ‘People from China are very rich’. I replied that I’m just a teacher here and I told him that I’m not from China. (Fieldnotes 05/10/13)

Example 4: ‘Sir, where are you from? Are you Japanese?’ asked a Year 7 boy. ‘No, *Macaalin* is from Malaysia!’, a chubby well-dressed boy in a Ralph Lauren jumper said. ‘Sir, but you sound like you’re from America, you have an American accent’, insisted another girl (the one that stuck out her tongue at me the previous week). I said yes, I lived in the United States for a few years. ‘Where, Sir?’ ‘Mostly in Florida’, I said. ‘Oh, that’s why you’re so yellow’, she replied. ‘Shame!’, said another older girl, ‘that is so bad!’ (Fieldnotes 05/10/13)

The examples from my observational fieldnotes above illustrate some of the ways that I was perceived as an outsider at my research site. In example one, Fouzia viewed my ability to teach English with some scepticism and in example 2, the Chinese were viewed as having superior skills in Maths and Science. In the third encounter, I was viewed as a member of the Chinese nouveau riche. In the fourth example, I was viewed as a yellow skinned person with an American accent.

In short, the episodes above depict my presence at the site as an outsider, the topic that is discussed in the following subsection. In addition, whilst my background as a postgraduate researcher, male of Chinese ethnic descent and social class privilege may have differed considerably to many of my participants, I was also a participant in the school as a senior English teacher. In this way, I was both insider and outsider to the supplementary school and it is plausible that these factors could have worked both in my favour and against.

2.5.1 The Insider/Outsider conflict and its relevance for this study

The preceding reflections have discussed how I might have been construed at the site as an out-group member due to the researcher and the informants' ethnic and cultural differences. This insider/outsider conundrum is not easily resolved, as Spivak (1990) warns

[i]t is not a solution, the idea of the disenfranchised speaking for themselves, or the radical critics speaking for them; this question of representation, self-representation, representing others, is a problem ... as long as one remains aware that it is a very problematic field, there is some hope (Spivak 1990: 63).

Spivak's statement in part reflects the dilemma that I faced in gathering data. My initial concerns were mostly centred on the effect I would have on this research as a non-member of the SLS community and whether they would actually talk to me and open up parts of their life histories to an outsider. However, as fellow members of minority ethnic groups in London, we had a shared understanding of the migration experience and the accompanying issue of racism which again in part, mitigated the problem. For example, during one of the many conversations I had with the staff members at the school, I noticed that Nuradin, a volunteer Maths teacher, looked a bit glum. When questioned, I found out that he was shortlisted for a teaching position in a Further Education college, but his application was rejected after the second interview. I tried to cheer him up and offered to analyse the reason for his unsuccessful application, but he said, 'Steve, don't you know we are living in a racist society?' He then asked me about my success rate in applying for English teaching positions and if I had thought about the reasons behind my less-than-impressive results. Episodes such as these show how shared experiences of racism faced by members of visible ethnic minority groups help to mitigate the insider/outsider issue. As a result, I felt we were able to share a sense of solidarity. As Egharevba (2001), who self-describes as a 'British-born first-generation Nigerian woman [who] came to conduct research on a group of South Asian women' (Egharevba 2001: 226) argues,

whilst factors such as gender, class, establishing credibility and rapport, language, religion and culture are important, a shared minority status and understanding of racism between the researched and the researcher may affect the research relationship most significantly in relation to the type and level of information shared by the researched (Ibid: 226).

Harris's (2006) reflections are also helpful in my attempt to mediate the problem of researching as in-group or out-group member; researchers as out-group members might be accused of 'fundamentally misunderstanding, patronising or misrepresenting the group under study' (2006: 15) but in-group members might miss out on what is 'strange about the familiar' (ibid). In this sense, whilst I may not have had the lens to share the 'native's' worldview, I was more attentive to cultural particularities that might seem normal or mundane to a 'native'. With these concerns in mind, I carefully reflected on the experiences of my engagement with my focal informants to provide a view that is as sympathetic as possible to their perspective. Duranti (1997) explains that descriptions of field work imply

'two apparently contradictory qualities: (i) an ability to step back and distance oneself from one's own immediate, culturally biased reactions so to achieve an acceptable degree of 'objectivity' and (ii) the propensity to achieve sufficient identification with or empathy for the members of the group in order to provide an insider's perspective – what anthropologists call 'the emic view' (ibid: 85)

Duranti's quote provided important insights for my work, and I took care to achieve a degree of objectivity in my analysis by avoiding culturally biased reactions. Furthermore, as I have illustrated previously, that while my informants and I do not share similar cultural backgrounds, we have shared identifications as members of a visible ethnic minority in London which gave me a sliver of the 'emic view'. In contrast, the etic view, or constant comparative viewpoint is the 'external, social scientific perspective on reality' (Fetterman, 1989: 32) and helps to understand underlying actions, patterns and features.

In addition to how they view my presence at the site, my informants also questioned what I would gain from my research. For example,

At the end of the afternoon session, Fatumo asked me 'Sir, what are you going to do with this research?' 'I hope to complete my PhD with this data and try to get it published', I answered. Safiyo immediately said, 'So you're going to be famous why can't you use our real names? I wanna be famous too.' The other students agreed and insisted that I use their real names and I had to explain that research ethics prevent me from revealing their identities (Fieldnotes 12/11/13).

In the above encounter, my informants knew that some recognition might be gained from my work and to an extent, the episode above chimes in with some of Ventakesh's (2002) experiences of carrying out his ethnographic study in a socially deprived area in the US. Ventakesh reflected that his informants 'understood quite well that the ghetto was a source of value... making my money by translating their lives into presentable, titillating stories...' (Ventakesh 2002: 98). Having provided an account of the considerations involved in conducting an ethnographically informed study, the following section offers the reader a view of the research procedure and the research instruments that were deployed in my data collection.

2.6 The research procedure – the site, participants, instruments

This section provides a discussion of the research procedure and the instruments used to collect this study's data. I will also highlight the problems that I have encountered during the research process and some of the ways they were mitigated.

2.6.1 The research site -the negotiation of access and problems encountered

Initially I had wanted to conduct this research at the supplementary school that I have described in the Introduction chapter. However, due to a sudden cut in funding by the local authority, that particular school had to cease its operations. This unexpected problem was distressing as I did not have access to other research sites. After calling a number of my Somali contacts, one of whom offered to contact a friend who operates a community centre in Southeast London. Apart from operating as a Somali community organization, the centre also provides homework support for English, Maths and Science to primary and secondary Somali children during the weekends. After presenting my research proposal to the school's director, he agreed to grant access for me to collect data. In return for providing access to the site, he asked for my assistance in teaching some English classes which I readily agreed to. During the time of my fieldwork, there were 55 schoolchildren registered at the school. These young SLS typically lived around the area in which the school is located. In Chapter 3, I provide the social demographics and a discussion of how specificities of funding requirements from the local council authority shapes the ethnic makeup of school. Research was conducted from June 2013 to

December 2014 and data was collected over approximately 50 visits to the school. I typically spent about six hours per visit at the site. While the majority of these visits were for the purpose of data collection, about five of these occasions were social events.

Second, I had intended to conduct an analysis of the language practices emerging from my informants' naturally occurring talk across multiple sites. However, I encountered problems with collecting data outside the confines of the research site as while my key informants initially agreed to record their naturally occurring talk at home and other public spaces, only two of them eventually provided a limited amount of data. Further, I faced problems with translating the recordings of the multilingual practices that these informants provided. Although many of my Somali contacts offered to translate segments of the audio recordings, it turned out that they didn't understand the dialects that were used by my informants. Related to this problem is my original aim to research 'Somali' ethnicity. It turned out that over the course of my fieldwork, my informants strongly identify with the ethnic particularities of people from Somaliland (see chapter 4). The problems that I encountered shows the importance of conducting an ethnographic study as the problem of translation shows that there isn't 'one' Somali language and by extension, it shows why it is problematic to adopt an essentialised and universal view of Somali ethnicity in the UK. Hence, I am conscious that while my research investigates the nature of Somali ethnicities, it is actually focused on a group of people with ties to Somaliland. This important aspect of Somali ethnicities has been largely overlooked by the UK research literature which in turn, contributed to an imprecisely sketched view of the nature of Somali ethnicities in the UK.

2.6.2 The participants

As my research is concerned with the emergent nature of Somali ethnicities across two generations, I decided to focus on ten key informants, comprising three male adults and seven young SLS that I regularly interacted with. Ethical procedures were carefully adhered to with all requisite ethical approval obtained from King's College London before doing my fieldwork. All my informants read the letter of introduction and were given the opportunity to ask any questions before the fieldwork started. I also explained that my informants' participation in the research are voluntary that they could decide to

stop at any juncture if they wished. In the case of young participants, parents and/or carers were consulted first and asked to sign informed consent forms on behalf of young participants before the research commenced. I had also supplied informed consent forms in both English and Somali language. The basic biographical information of these informants is highlighted in table 1 below.

Name	Age	Gender	Place of origin	Migration trajectory	Role (s) at the research site
Mohamed	47	Male	Somaliland	Kenya, USA, Canada	Senior English teacher, Manager
Axmaadeey	46	Male	Somaliland	India, Czech Republic	Senior Maths teacher
Farhan	49	Male	Somaliland	Kenya	Centre director
Abuubakar	17	Male	London		Teacher's assistant, informant
Safiyo	16	Female	London		Student, informant
Asad	16	Male	London		Student, informant
Nasra	16	Female	UAE	Somaliland, Holland	Student, informant
Shamso	16	Female	Holland		Student, informant

Naciimo	15	Female	Holland		Student, informant
Daaud	16	Male	UK		Student, informant

Table 1: General information of the research informants

The table above provides a general idea of the individual biographies among this group of SLS. However, this is an incomplete view as I argue in chapter 4, a detailed analysis of the ways individual biographical trajectories shape SLS' identifications within a range of categories was required to provide a fuller picture. The following subsection discusses the set of research tools that was deployed during my fieldwork.

2.6.3 Research instruments

In this subsection, I firstly provide the reader with my justifications for the research instruments consisting of observation fieldnotes, conversational interviews, audio recordings of naturally occurring speech and retrospective interviews that were deployed in this study. Second, I deliberate the benefits and potential limitations of my dataset.

2.6.3 (a) Participant observation fieldnotes:

Field note-taking as a way of documenting the researcher's experiences and observations from the field has a rich tradition in 'the history of social, cultural and linguistic anthropology' (Heath & Street, 2008: 76). In continuing this tradition, I place particular importance on the observations of my encounters with the research subjects. In my roles as a researcher and GCSE English teacher, my observations of the enactment of Somali ethnicities yielded 70 typed A4 sheets of ethnographic field notes. My observations of cultural practices at the site, for example, show the enactment of the Muslim ritual of daily prayers among a section of SLS. By closely looking at the observed practices among the participants, my study reveals that as a group, SLS do not uniformly perform a set of Muslim rituals. Further, observation fieldnotes as a research instrument provide invaluable information not only about *what* the researcher witnessed in the field but *how*

he/she feels as the event unfolds (Blommaert and Dong 2010). In this sense, I am also aware that the description of the events that I have witnessed and the way I feel during these episodes are neither neutral nor interpretation-free. However, this does not negate the importance of documenting these encounters as accurately as possible in order to illustrate the specific situated events of these encounters. Although considered the cornerstone of ethnographic research, there is some criticism of 'inherent' weaknesses of this method of data collection. Tonkin (1984) for instance, argues that the more you observe, 'the further you are from participation; while the time you must take to keep up your notes threatens to preclude either activity' (1984: 218). To address this possible limitation, I supplemented my participant observation notes with recordings of my informants' naturally occurring speech and interviews to explore themes that I might have missed. Another problem identified was the inevitable 'observer's paradox' - when people are aware of being observed then it is very probable that their behaviour will not be the same (Milroy and Gordon 2003). This relates to the more general goal of ethnography to collect 'natural' data, that is, to observe how people behave or use language when they are not being observed. However, as I made repeated visits at the site during the period of my fieldwork, the participants were used to my presence at the site. I freely mingled with the members of staff, students and their parents. Nonetheless, as Duranti (1997) argues, neutral observation is a myth and in fact, "being a social actor, a participant in *any* situation and in *any* role, means to be part of the situation and hence affect it" (emphasis as in original) (Duranti 1997: 118). This potential obstacle should not be ignored but instead should be addressed by knowing that it is unavoidable (Duranti 1997).

2.6.3. (b) Audio-recordings with radio-microphones

In addition to my participant observation fieldnotes of the typical practices at the site, I also provided my informants with audio recording devices to record their naturally occurring speech at the school. I used two methods to collect this source of data, the first involving two of the adult informants who wore the audio recording devices during their everyday activities at the school. I told them that they could record whatever they wished and to stop or delete parts of the recording if they wanted to. In total, Mohamed and Axmaadeey provided 20 hours of natural talk in the classroom with their students and in their interactions with adult SLS at the school. Interestingly, while I had initial

apprehensions about my informants' willingness to record their naturally occurring speech, Axmaadeey and Mohamed were in fact happy to wear the microphones to record their talk. They were intrigued that I was interested in capturing segments of their talk. The second set of self-recorded naturally occurring speech examples were collected by 3 young SLS who agreed to record their interactions during lunch breaks at the school. These audio recordings essentially provided a rich source of data to analyse the spontaneous ways in which my informants communicate with their peers and the teachers.

2.6.3 (c) Classroom recordings

The second set of audio recordings captured 7 young SLS' naturally occurring speech during GCSE English lessons. These interactions were recorded during 20 episodes of classroom talk in which two audio recording devices were placed on both ends of the long table where my informants typically sit. Classroom recordings yielded about 60 hours of spontaneous talk in which young SLS expressed their views on a range of topics from their diasporic connections to their lived experiences in their locality. These topics were largely and inadvertently triggered by some of the topics emerging from a range of exercises derived from GCSE English syllabus. These situated events typically take place every Saturday at 3 pm and lasts for about 3 hours per session. The classes were held in the 'conference room' located on the 2nd floor of the building. It is a narrow space dominated by a large table which was surrounded by about 10 chairs in the centre of the room. A whiteboard is attached to the right wall and the markers and board eraser could be found on a small side table beside it. The norms of interaction for these classes start with me in my role as the teacher and one of the speakers. As their teacher, I routinely give verbal instructions and provide guidance for the students to complete their tasks. However, in the course of the event, the other speakers are free to talk and oftentimes, I would elicit their views on the topics that arise from the tasks. However, I am also aware that there are possible limitations of collecting 'naturally occurring speech' as how authentic can it be if the informants are conscious that their speech was being recorded. As such, I am aware that my informants' naturally occurring speech data must not be taken at face value and that it is contextualised to the speech events and the speakers involved.

2.6.3 (d) Conversational interviews

Interviewing in qualitative research is an effective tool in cases where the focus is on getting insight into how the interviewees make sense of social processes (Taylor and Bodgan, 1984; Holstein and Gubrium, 1995). According to Kvale (1996: 174) an interview is “a conversation, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the [life-world] of the interviewee” with respect to interpretation of the meanings of the ‘described phenomena’. For the purposes of this study, I drew on the principles of ethnographic interviewing (Briggs, 1986; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009) to facilitate a conversation, thereby giving the respondent considerable leeway to give their personal account without much interference from the interviewer. With this aim in mind, I conducted these recorded interviews on my informants without a set of sequenced questions, but rather with a few main interview questions reflecting the central concern of the study, which were drafted in such a way as to trigger respondents into talking about issues that matter to them (Rubin and Rubin, 2005: 135). For example, the question ‘Tell me about your family’ triggered my informants’ accounts of their diasporic connections and migratory trajectories.

I conducted individual and group interviews with the adults over multiple occasions at the school and over meals at restaurants. The interviews that were conducted in social settings provided a relaxed ambience for interviewing the adult informants. I decided to conduct both individual and group interviews with the adults with two aims in mind. One, individual interviews were conducted to investigate my adult informants’ biographical trajectories and I reasoned that personal details such as their migration histories might be elicited without the presence of another informant. This venture was fruitful as adult SLS shared aspects of their migration and life experiences. Second, group interviews were conducted to elicit possible contrasting views on the topics that they choose to share with me. Again, this proved to be a useful exercise as these group interviews were more akin to friendly debates on current events and UK Government policies at the time of my fieldwork.

Each young SLS was interviewed once, a process that was conducted over two Saturday afternoons at the school. As the school is a busy place, I decided to conduct these interviews after 5 pm, when most of the students had left. Due to the open plan nature of the school’s physical space, I conducted these interviews at the far corner of the room.

During those episodes, Axmaadeey and Mohamed were present, but they did not interfere with the interview process. I am aware that their presence as teachers and adults might constrain young SLS' responses but it was a situation I could not resolve. However, during the interviews, young SLS freely talked about their adherences to Islamic principles and on multiple occasions, two of the young male informants used swear words in the descriptions of their local lived experiences. During these encounters, the adult SLS observed my interview process but did not comment on the young informants' accounts or reprimand them for using swear words. Second, although I had initial reservations about whether young female SLS would be allowed to, or are open to being interviewed, my fears were unfounded as their parents readily gave their consent. The girls were also interested to share their lived experiences with me.

These informal interviews typically lasted in effect for about 40 minutes to an hour per informant and in total, the exercise yielded approximately 10 hours of recordings. During the interviews, my informants openly discussed their daily routines, their family and friends, the events associated with their life trajectories and their perceptions about their lives in relation to other ethnic groups in their locality. However, I also take the view that my informants' accounts are the points of departure but not the complete picture of their lived experiences and thus are open to my interpretation.

2.6.3 (e) Retrospective interviews

In order to investigate segments of particular significance emerging from my informants' audio recordings, I also invited them to attend retrospective interviews. These retrospective interviews were conducted during lunch breaks at the school, sometimes with individual participants and at times as a group. The segments of recorded speech that required my participants' retrospective thoughts (Rampton 2005) were played back to them. There were two aims in this endeavour. Firstly, I needed translations of the small communicative habits in Somali and Arabic in adult SLS' spontaneous speech. By playing back some of the excerpts, Axmaadeey and Mohamed identified and translated segments of talk that were not uttered in English. The second aim was to elicit my informants' thoughts on topics of significance which emerged from a careful listening of the recordings. For example, the problem of young SLS' exclusion from identifying with

a black social identity in South London emerging from several episodes of classroom recording required my informants' reflective thoughts about their experiences. This set of data was collected by conducting two group retrospective interviews over my period of fieldwork. My rationale for doing group retrospective interviews was to enable young SLS' to share their individual lived experiences. In doing so I was able to elicit their shared experiences of how local discourses of race and ethnicity exclude SLS from gaining membership into the black social category. As this section has shown, my dataset comprised of the four research instruments outlined above. I now turn to the discussion of the process of transcribing the audio recordings that I have collected.

2.6.4 Audio transcription and analysis

Since the main concern of the present study is on the ways that Somali ethnicities are constituted among my core informants, I acknowledge here that there is no absolute and precise manner in which my informants' naturally occurring talk could be transcribed. As Atkinson (1992) argues, 'there is no such thing as a 'natural' mechanism for the representation of speech' (Atkinson 1992: 23). Roberts (1997) also points out that 'all transcription is representation, and there is no natural or objective way in which talk can be written' (Roberts, 1997: 168). In this light, the transcripts are in part representations of their utterances as there is no objective way in which their spoken discourse could be written down. Lapadat and Lindsay (1998) also argue that transcription is linked to interpretive consequences and conclude 'transcription is theory laden: the choices researchers make about transcription enact the theories they hold' (1998: 3). However, Lapadat sees benefit in the transcription process as it intensifies the researcher's 'familiarity with the data, which leads to the methodological and theoretical thinking essential to interpretation' (Lapadat 2000: 204). The views postulated by Atkinson, Roberts, Lapadat and Lindsay and Lapadat informed my own process of transcription. This process of many hours of closely listening to the voices of my informants to identify the emergent key themes that constitute the nature of Somali ethnicities was a productive venture as it allowed me to interpret and analyse my informants' voices. I personally transcribed all the conversational and retrospective interviews to allow my informants' accounts to emerge. With regard to the audio recordings of the informants' naturally occurring speech in my dataset, I provided transcriptions of what I deemed to be extracts of relevance to the topic of my research. I chose to represent my informants' voices by

using low-level transcription, but I have included pauses, moments of deliberation such as um and ah, stutters, giggles, repetition and interruptions in transcripts. This laborious but ultimately enriching experience was undertaken in my attempt to show as much as possible, the unkemptness of typical conversations. My first step in analysing data was to code each interview and samples of naturally occurring speech by highlighting salient themes. Central to this process is a distilling of the essence of the individual interviews and individual and group naturally occurring speech in order to identify patterns and regularities in the data. My concern is the lived experiences of my informants in the sense that I wanted to investigate how Somali ethnicities were formed and circulated in talk, the presentation of transcribed interviews and audio recordings of naturally occurring speech in Chapters 4 to 7 were driven by the theoretical thinking required to interpret the data.

This section has offered the reader a description of the research process and my justifications for deploying a set of research instruments. I have also illustrated the work undertaken and the considerations involved in the collection, transcription and analysis of my dataset.

Conclusion:

This chapter situates the methodological stance adopted in the thesis and provides a description and justification for the research procedures undertaken in its development. In order to gain a nuanced understanding of how SLS experience and make sense of aspects of their social and cultural worlds, this study involved a specific focus on a small group of key informants. These understandings necessarily involve an insight into the ways my informants signal their identifications by an analysis of their self-declarations and by their conscious and unconscious communicative habits. The chapter has also considered the methodological approaches undertaken by some important ethnographic studies in that location and others in London. I have also pointed out that heretofore, Somalis in the UK have not been studied in this way and explained that while this project should not be considered a fully-fledged ethnography in traditional anthropological terms, it is nevertheless deeply embedded in ethnographic principles. Lastly, this chapter has also shown why the study's systematic analysis of the informants' social identifications

required the ethnography of speaking framework as a format to discuss and interpret their affiliations within a range of categories, which are addressed in chapters 4 to 7.

Chapter 3: ‘South London Somalis’ and their locality

Introduction

This chapter sets the scene for the upcoming themes that are explored in this thesis by providing the reader with an ethnographically informed description of the local context in which my informants lived during my period of fieldwork. As I have pointed out in Chapter 1, Somalis in the UK are generally viewed by the research literature as a group of people who are hermetically sealed and disconnected from UK society. I have also expressed that this portrayal does not match the experiences of my encounters with a small group of people who self identify as Somalis in London. Hence, this chapter provides the basis for my argument that a part of the nature of Somali ethnicities in the UK must be understood in relation to ‘place’, namely the local specificities which were shaped by the historical and contemporary social demographics of the areas in which Somalis in the UK live their everyday lives. Rather than trying to conceptualise a universal nature of Somali ethnicity in the UK, my thesis investigates how Somali ethnicities manifest itself in the local context. It also shows that an aspect of Somali ethnicities in the UK is contoured by the effects of daily living and engaging with their ethnically diverse colleagues at work or classmates at school or neighbours at their place of residence which in this study, is an area teeming with multi-ethnic inhabitants who possess diverse linguistic, cultural and religious practices. As Amin (2008) notes, the ‘city’ itself is not a discernible place, it is the various locations within it which need to be acknowledged as sites of potential civility and encounter:

...the sites of civic and political formation are plural and distributed. ... the sites of political formation have proliferated, to include the micro-politics of work, school, community and neighbourhood, and the workings of states, constitutions, assemblies, political parties and social movements.... (Amin 2008: 6)

Informed by Amin’s (2008) thinking, my study takes the urban environment that my informants are rooted in as the starting point of investigation. To this end, the initial section locates and charts the social landscape in which my research site is embedded. My fieldwork was conducted at a Somali community centre in an area I refer to as South Docks, an electoral ward located in the London borough of Southwark. In section 3.1, I

provide a discussion of some aspects of the historical and social setting of the borough before I focus on the local specificities of South Docks. Section 3.2 offers some examples of the public signs in this area. It shows how indexical information about the area's residents might be understood from a study of the encoded messages that were projected by these signs. As a non-resident of this locality, section 3.3 offers some of my ethnographic observations of the banal intermingling of cultures that I have witnessed on my journeys to the research site. This section also provides the reader with some examples of local discourses of ethnicities that I have observed and engaged with in my travels to the site. I finally discuss aspects of the physical space of my research site and how the local council authority policies may have construed Somalis in this area as a bounded group of people.

3.1 Some aspects of the historical and contemporary social setting of Southwark

The Inner London borough of Southwark lies to the south east of the city. Southwark is flanked by the boroughs of Lewisham to the east, Bromley to the south, Lambeth to the west and the river Thames acts as a boundary with the boroughs of the City of London and Tower Hamlets to the north. Many of London's key tourist attractions, including the Tower Bridge, Millennium Bridge and London Bridge, Borough Market, the Imperial War Museum and the Tate Modern are contained within the borough of Southwark. Historically, certain areas within the borough of Southwark have been associated with the settlement and cultural practices of its poor, white working-class residents. As Collins (2004) notes, Southwark is one of the most ancient London boroughs and is traditionally construed as 'the poor whore across the water, housing the smells, the produce, the noise, the prisons and leper hospitals' (Collins 2004: 10). Due to these conditions, Southwark has been a

fertile soil for those from other classes who slipped into the missionary position and embarked on expeditions to discover and understand the working class by social investigation, social anthropology, or simply slumming it. Almost all were well-intentioned, many were deluded, many more were patronising, some changed lives for the better, and collectively they attempted to familiarise the working class with-for starters-God, sobriety, reform, revolution and utopianism (Collins 2004: 9).

Collins's (2004) account above reflects the moral imperatives that drove social investigators from 'other classes' who researched the lives of the socially deprived at Southwark. The poverty experienced by the people in this area was something to be discovered and 'changed' by familiarising the working classes with a set of moral values such as 'God, sobriety, reform and utopianism' (Collins 2004: *ibid*). In addition, the residents of Southwark have been associated with the pattern of working-class culture³ by the late 1890s in which

the tribe would be associated throughout the first half of the following century, with its pub, popular songs, football, fish and chips, elaborate funerals, good neighbours and street markets. It was a culture created in isolation, distinct from the official culture of the country (Collins 2004: 54).

Collins (*ibid*) also noted that up until the 1960s, certain areas in Southwark consists of mainly working-class white residents. The 1970s witnessed the relocation of certain industries to the new areas beyond the boundary of the city of London and a number of skilled workers from the white working classes opted for the chance of resettlement. The exodus of the original white residents from working class neighbourhoods like 'Walworth, Bermondsey and Rotherhite in Southwark to the satellite suburbs of Southeast London' such as 'Eltham, Welling and Bexleyheath' (Collins 2004: 10) has been replaced by international migrants from several countries who settled in the area. The largest single group originated from Jamaica and other parts of the Caribbean. Hewitt (1986) points out that within a particular area of South London,

[i]n the late 1950s and early 1960s a 'Caribbean quarter' developed, as West Indians bought up houses, initially in a single street, and sublet them to other West Indians as well as to whites... Shops and market stalls mushroomed, while black churches, social clubs, educational and other self-help projects came to coordinate and give visible identity to the black community, and in some respects to superimpose new networks of kinship and association on the older, fading white working-class patterns (Hewitt 1986: 13-14).

³ In contemporary times, Collins (2004) argues that the white working class have been demonised and were seen to be 'more obese than their equivalent throughout Europe. They loved Gucci, loathed the Euro. More importantly, to their pallbearers in the press they were racist, xenophobic, thick, illiterate, parochial. They survived on the distant memory of winning one world cup and two world wars, and were still tuning in to the ailing soap that is the House of Windsor. All they represent and hold dear was reportedly redundant in modern multicultural Britain' (Collins 2004: 8)

As Hewitt (1986) notes above, the settlement of black people within the area and the establishment of businesses and places of worship has given visible identity to this particular group of residents. By the 1980s, the number of black people in this area constituted 25 percent of the overall population of the borough (Back 1996). Back (1996) has also noted that the area was segregated into

a white population that was ageing, as young white people moved out, and a disproportionately youthful black population... Equally, during the later part of the 1980s and 1990s a significant number of West Africans took up residence in this part of London (Back 1996: 20).

Since the 1980s, the population of Southwark has increased steadily as a result of natural growth in addition to net migration. According to the Southwark Demographic Factsheet (Southwark Council 2015), the population of this London borough was reported to number around 307000 and it is the 9th most densely populated area in the UK. About 52% of the population were categorised as belonging to the White group, 48% to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic group (Southwark Council 2015). Within the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic group, 16% were classified as belonging to a broad African ethnic group, 6% classified as of 'Caribbean' ethnicity, 9% as 'Black other' and 11% belonging to the 'Asian' ethnic category. According to the Office of National Statistics (ONS 2013) Ethnicity Estimates, less than half (46.5%) of Southwark's children are 'White British', a smaller proportion than Adults (51.7%) and Older people (68.5%). 29.5% of children are from 'Black' ethnicities, as are 19% of adults and 14% of older people. The Southwark Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) report commissioned by Southwark Council highlights that in general, 'the population is relatively young, with significant contrasts of poverty and wealth' and there is also a 'wide distribution in educational achievement, access to employment and housing quality' (Southwark Council 2011: 1). Further, the diverse ethnic makeup of Southwark's population is not distributed evenly among its wards as a high proportion of people classified as belonging to Black Caribbean and Black African ethnic groupings are concentrated in specific areas such as South Docks⁴ while the white British population mostly reside in Southwark Village, Surrey Docks, Rotherhithe, South Bermondsey and Riverside (Southwark Council 2011).

⁴ Evans's (2005) ethnographic study reveals that 'South Docks' is locally known as a "black people's manor" while the residents of the adjacent ward of Bermondsey remained predominantly white working-class.

The information in this section has provided some aspects of the area's historical and contemporary social demographics. It has shown how the borough of Southwark has been traditionally resided by the mostly white working classes but the result of outward migration and the influx of migrants from the 1950s onwards have transformed the population demographics of this area. In the following section, I will provide some historical and social aspects that are specific to the electoral ward in which my research site is located.

3.1.1 The historical and social setting of South Docks

South Docks originated as a small hamlet within close distance from London. It was initially mentioned in the 11th century Domes Day book and its 'name denotes a village or homestead' (Smith and Roethe 2009: 4). From the 17th century South Docks developed along the line of a number of villages in around London and together with the adjacent area of Camberwell, were described as 'pleasant villages ... with some of the finest dwellings about London' (Smith and Roethe 2009: 8). During the 18th century, the amenities in South Docks

included an annual fair, a theatre, a number of public houses, schools and non-conformist chapels; all contributing to a cosmopolitan leisure based local ambience, socially mixed and licentious in its architecture as in its activities (Smith and Roethe 2009: 8).

During this pre-Victorian period, South Docks was also regarded as 'a place of out-of-town residence for courtiers and merchants and then as a resort ... in the 18th century' (Smith and Roethe 2009: 9). As a result of better transport links and the burgeoning London population, this area became populated by residents who were viewed as distinctly 'working class' during the Victorian era. This group of white working-class residents grew rapidly, and the middle classes relocated their holidays elsewhere (Smith and Roethe 2009). South Docks was heavily redeveloped in the 1960s, consisting mainly of high-rise flats to rehouse people from dilapidated old houses but high unemployment and a lack of economic opportunities led to areas that suffered severe social deprivation. The white working-class residents of South Docks began to move away from this area during the 1970s as the first influx of black and brown skinned migrants and their descendants moved in. Several large social housing estates feature as the most intense

areas of deprivation within South Docks and it is a place of reception in the city into which migrants arrive and share space with established residents. Statistically, South Docks is high in poverty indicators as Southwark Council (2011) reported that unemployment in this area were at above average rates at 20.6 per cent and 26.8 per cent of those aged between 17 and 75 had no education or training qualifications. Specific areas in South Docks are tightly associated with gang-related gun and knife crime (Southwark Council 2011), and with a traditional south London working class—portrayed in comic form in the popular sitcom *Only Fools and Horses*⁵. South Docks is also generally perceived by the media as an undesirable locale to visit as for example, in January 2013, the *Guardian* newspaper reported the airline company *easyJet*'s advertising campaigns across London's bus networks that portrayed South Docks in a negative light (Davis 2013). These advertisements were soon removed after a barrage of fierce criticism from local residents and councillors. In 2011, South Docks has the highest proportion of African Caribbean residents of any constituency in the country and the highest proportion of social housing of any seat, with about half the population living in homes rented from the council or a housing association. In the 2011 census (Southwark Council 2011), the population of this area was reported to total about 14,720 and is composed of approximately 51% females and 49% males. The average age of its residents is 32 and 52% of people who reside in this area were born in the UK (see table 2 below).

⁵ Only Fools and Horses is a British television sitcom that was set in this south-east London area. Seven series were originally broadcast on BBC One in the United Kingdom from 1981 to 1991

Country of birth	Percentage of population
UK	52
Nigeria	11.3
Jamaica	3.5
South America	3.4
Ghana	2.7
Somalia	1.0
Ireland	1.0
North Africa	0.9
Bangladesh	0.8
China	0.6

Table 2: Demographics of 'South Docks' (Southwark Council 2011)

It is within the context of the social demographics of South Docks that my informants' everyday lives are lived. As shown in table 2, people who reported to be born in Somalia constitute only about 1% of the population and this low number have particular effects on how Somalis in this area were construed (a topic that will be highlighted in chapter 7). Further, it shows how Somalis in this part of Southeast London were embedded in a socially deprived area with high levels of crime rates. In the following section, I provide the reader with some of the public signs that were emplaced in this place.

3.2 Some of the emplaced signs at Southwark

This section provides the reader with some examples of the public signs in the Southeast London landscape that I observed during my fieldwork. These signs provide some indexical information about the social demographics of the area and constitute a part of

what Blommaert (2014) refers to as linguistic landscapes. According to Blommaert (2014),

signs, index processes of demographic, social and economic change... Thus, every sign selects an audience, and these acts of selection can be read from the features of the sign – from its indexicals, in other words (Blommaert 2014: 433).

Blommaert's (2014) quote above argues for an ethnographic approach to a study of linguistic landscapes to provide the reader with some of the signs that provide indexical information of the social demographics of the area's inhabitants. In the context of my research, a close investigation of some of the signs on my journeys to the site reveals how some of the visible linguistic codes and the embedded messages contained in the signs select certain audiences in this locality. The following images are some examples of the visible public signs that I encounter on my journey from Elephant and Castle station to my research site.



Figure 1: The Metropolitan Tabernacle and Dashwood Studios

Opposite Elephant and Castle station is the imposing building with the name 'Metropolitan Tabernacle'⁶ inscribed below the roof. In this image, a building that has been in existence since the 17th century coexist beside a newly built tower of flats. It suggests that traditional practices of religious worship in this space has been maintained by some of this area's residents in contemporary London.



Figure 2: The sign in front of the Metropolitan Tabernacle

The sign that foregrounds Metropolitan Tabernacle in image 1 above advertises its services in English to attract all groups of potential worshippers. The sign also tempts prospective worshippers with the promise of a 'warm welcome' with its claim that its members are 'a friendly crowd of all ages and backgrounds'. From the message inscribed in this sign, this religious organisation clearly welcomes people of diverse backgrounds and from all age groups.

⁶ The Metropolitan Tabernacle is a large Independent Reformed Baptist church in the Elephant and Castle in London. It was the largest non-conformist church of its day in 1861 and The Tabernacle Fellowship have been worshipping together since 1650.



Figure 3: Dashwood studios

Beside the Metropolitan Tabernacle stands the block of office and tower of flats named Dashwood Studios. As shown in figure 3, the sign was written in Standard English on the wall beside the entrance. The name ‘Dashwood Studios’ was written in large font while the description of the accommodation in a smaller font reveals that the building specifically caters for the burgeoning student population of London’s many universities. However,

the description ‘Premium Student Accomodation’ targets affluent students, perhaps the international students who attend many of London’s universities.



Figure 4: Dragon Castle Restaurant

Along Walworth Road, adjacent to Dashwood Studios is a Chinese restaurant with an imposing entrance guarded by lions carved out of stone (see figure 4). The design of this restaurant’s façade and its red doors are evocative of traditional palaces in China. On the sign, the linguistic codes of Chinese and English were used declare the name of the restaurant. The decision to use Chinese characters in large font at the top of the sign signals the authenticity of the food that it offers and suggests that the owner is a person of Chinese descent. The English words ‘Dragon Castle’ communicates the message that the business welcomes all customers but a closer look at the prohibitive prices listed in the menu attached to right side of the façade of the restaurant suggests that it exclusively targets affluent clientele.



Figure 5: Ossie's Jerk Chicken and Mek-Sky Remit Ltd

Further along Walworth Road, the businesses advertised by the shops that flank both sides of the street cater to the specific needs of the working class multi ethnic residents of the area. In image 5 above, both of the shops' signs were communicated in English. The shop on the left offers international money transfer and cargo services in addition peddling children and women's clothes. The existence of numerous businesses that offers money transfer services in this area points to the practices of some of its residents who maintain diasporic connections by remitting money or sending goods to their homelands. On the right of this shop is a restaurant that offers Caribbean takeaway and cuisine. By using English in its signage, the restaurant clearly targets all groups of people in this area. The Jamaican flag on the top right of its sign provides indexical information which suggests that the business owner has particular diasporic connections with Jamaica. On this particular stretch of road, I encountered 5 'Caribbean' restaurants, indicating the established presence of people of African Caribbean descent in this place.



Figure 6: Place of religious worship for Spanish speakers

Further along the road, I counted about 8 churches that were housed in modest shoplots that line both sides of Walworth Road which suggests that a high number of people in this area pledge allegiance to certain strands of Christianity. However, some of these churches are selective with regard to the types of worshippers that they attract (see image 6). Firstly, apart from its address which was advertised in English, the sign communicates its message(s) exclusively in Spanish. The sign communicates an exclusive invitation to the Spanish speaking residents of this area to partake in their services and by extension, indicate the existence of Spanish speakers in this locality. This presence of Spanish speakers in this area is also evident in the sign of the shop in image 7 below. Apart from the English words that inform the audience that the shop is ‘open’ to ‘unisex’ customers and a banner that reads ‘final reductions’, the message contained in these signs targets the Spanish speaking audience of this area. Upon entering the shop, I talked to the proprietor and discovered that he originated from Colombia and that his clientele consists of mainly Spanish speaking residents in this area.



Figure 7: Colombian owned shop

A bit further down the road, Tesco's and Morrisons supermarkets face off to peddle their produce on either side of the street and as I walk along Walworth Road towards my research site, the types of shops and some of their signs target specific audiences. On one particular section of this road, I counted eight beauty salons that offer services that include manicures, eyebrow tattoos and etc. For example, in image 8 below, this shop specialises in wigs that come in a variety of colours. Intriguingly, although the sign advertises 'Wholesale and retail of Afro-Euro beauty products', the images on the signage and the photographs pasted on the shop front consist of black women with silky and straight hair. The many shops of similar ilk in this locality points to the large concentration of black people in this area and straight hair appears to be desirable for some of the females within this ethnic grouping.



Figure 8: Jennifer's hair and beauty shop

As I get closer to my destination, I counted six payday loan and pawnshops within 100 metres on a particular stretch. The existence of a large number of these payday loan and pawn broking businesses indicates the socially deprived conditions of this locality (Adeniyi et al 2017). Consequently, the presence of these businesses is alleged to have negative impacts that include increased crime occurrences (Kubrin et al, 2011), problem gambling (Wheeler et al., 2006) and exorbitant interest rates (Hill et al., 1998; Graves, 2003).



Figure 9: Dahabshiil shop

A few shops away from the cluster of pawn shops on this road is an internet café that also offers money transfer services. The Somali word ‘*Dahabshiil*’ (Gold smelter in Somali) were written in large font and the words ‘fast money transfer you can trust’ was inscribed in Standard English. The description of the shop’s services in English suggests that this shop targets all groups of residents in this area. More importantly, this ‘*Dahabshiil*’ shop points to the existence of people of Somali descent in this locality. *Dahabshiil* is a company founded in Somaliland and has specialised in remittance broking during the 1970s, when many Somali males from northern Somalia migrated to the Gulf States for work. This resulted in a growing demand for services to transfer money from those migrant workers back to their families (Maritz 2010). This shop shows that one of the practices among Somalis in this area is the remittance of funds to their families. Within close proximity of my research site, the building in image 10 below is named the ‘Camberwell Islamic Centre’ in English.



Figure 10: Camberwell Islamic Centre



Figure 11: The signs on the window of Camberwell Islamic Centre

On the windows of this mosque, two printed A4 sheets of paper informs the reader in English that ‘Friday Khuthuba (sermon in Arabic)’ and ‘Solat (prayer time in Arabic)’ commence at particular times of the day. The message on the sign above this place of worship and on its windows were articulated in English apart from the Arabic terms highlighted above. From reading its signage, this mosque clearly targets an audience who pledge allegiance to Islam but is not selective as regards to particular ethnic groups. However, from my many discussions with my adult informants, I found out that this place of worship is mostly frequented by many of the Somali residents in this locality. Across the street from this mosque is a block of council flats adjacent to my research site. As shown in the image below, in contrast to the new apartments located near Elephant and Castle station, these flats exclude unwanted people by the installation of barbed wires above its perimeter fencing, suggesting that this area experience high levels of crime. The flag of St George’s cross perhaps indicated this particular resident’s identification with certain forms of English nationalism.



Figure 12: Barbed wires

In short, an ethnographically informed description of some aspects of the context in which my research site is embedded reveals several aspects of this locality. The businesses and accommodations near Elephant and Castle station were designed to attract affluent clientele

and this was clearly displayed by the encoded messages embedded in their public signs. As I get closer towards my research site, the businesses that line both sides of Walworth Road jostle for the custom of the area's multi-ethnic residents. Further, numerous businesses that offer money transfer and international cargo services suggest that this area is inhabited by residents who maintain diasporic connections with their countries of origin. The high number of Caribbean restaurants also suggest that people of African Caribbean descent have established a strong visible presence in this area. The proliferation of pawnshops in this area also provide an indication of the social deprivation of this locality. Apart from a single mosque that serves the needs of its Muslim residents, the high number of churches that line Walworth Road is also suggestive of the majority of its residents' religious allegiance to multiple strands of Christianity. Finally, apart from the 'Dahabshiil' shop, Somalis in this area have not established a strong presence as I did not encounter Somali owned restaurants or corner shops. This indicates the status of Somalis at South Docks, this group are relative newcomers to the area who constitute only 1% of the population. In this section, I have attempted to provide the reader with a view of how the analysis of some of the signs that are emplaced in this locality provide some information about the practices and demographics of this locality. It also shows how my informants' everyday lives are lived in a socially deprived area and that it is this place that Somali ethnicities are negotiated in relation to the social demographics and cultural practices of the area's residents. The following section provides an example of how little acts of public civility might be enacted among the ethnically diverse residents in this area.

3.3 The sights and sounds of diversity in South Docks

This subsection shows how some of the sights and sounds that I encounter in my travels to my research site in South Docks reflects its multi-ethnic residents. It shows how the banal and fleeting intercultural interaction is commonplace in this area of Southeast London. As a non-local resident of this area, the journey from my place of residence in East London to the research site entailed boarding a train on the London Underground to Elephant and Castle station. From here, I typically board a bus to my research site. The episode below is an example of the typical banal interactions that I noticed during my journeys:

As I came out of Elephant and Castle station, a middle aged black woman of indeterminable ethnic descent accosted me and gave a leaflet that advertises the promise of eternal salvation. She smiled at me and said ‘Jesus loves you, come to our church, we’re always there for you’. I thanked her and kept the leaflet in my pocket. At the bus stop, a group of people of diverse ethnic backgrounds await to board the buses that transport them to their destinations. The number 176 bus that I routinely board to the field site is popular among local residents and it is rare for me to find an empty seat. On this particular journey in the bus, seated in front of me were two teenage girls of South Asian descent in colourful hijabs. During the journey, these girls were engaged in a loud conversation about their boyfriends in informal English. They appeared to be oblivious to the stern stares from an elderly Asian lady, perhaps to communicate her disapproval of their loud chatter or the topic of their conversation. Across the aisle from me two black ladies in their 40s talking about their menu for Sunday lunch and complaining about the high cost of okra, a typical West African food ingredient. At the East Street Market stop, an elderly black man got onto the bus and immediately, the two Asian girls offered their seats to him. He smiled and said, ‘Thank you, God bless you’ and sat down with a sigh as the bus ambled on towards Camberwell [Field notes 12/04/14].

This example of a typical encounter between people of different ethnicities in the above episode provides a suggestive illustration of how ‘the processes of cohabitation and interaction that have made multiculturalism an ordinary feature of urban life in Britain’ (Gilroy 2004: xi) is played out in Southeast London. Gilroy (2004) terms these processes as the cultures of conviviality emerging from the

social pattern in which different metropolitan groups dwell in close proximity, but where their racial, linguistic and religious particularities do not ... add up to discontinuities of experience or insuperable problems of communication” (Gilroy, 2004: 40).

Contemporary literature on the complexities of living together in diverse multicultural cities (Amin 2002, 2008; Valentine, 2008) often interprets conviviality as limited to positive but superficial and casual encounters, such as banal mingling, holding doors for people or small talk in public spaces that are unlikely to generate meaningful encounters. However, routine experiences of shared public spaces in urban environments normalises the intermingling of people of different ethnicities as according to Amin (2013),

[d]aily urban life in the multiethnic and multicultural city remains a form of habitual negotiating of difference, at most times without rancour. We see this most clearly in public spaces and shared workplaces, where being in the company of strangers is normalised through habits of co-dwelling or shared labour, without any explicit form of interpersonal recognition... being in the company of strangers is normalised through habits of co-dwelling or shared labour, without any explicit form of interpersonal recognition. Here, conviviality seems to be guided by rituals of studied co-presence, human habituation to the urban environment (Amin 2013: 4)

Here, Amin (2013) stresses how conviviality in urban contexts are guided by ‘rituals of studied co-presence’ and the snapshot of the public intermingling that I show in my fieldnotes above might be suggestive of this phenomenon. It shows how a token public act of civility demonstrated by the South Asian girls to the elderly black man in the episode above might have been a result of the normalisation of co-dwelling among people of diverse ethnicities in this particular urban environment. Despite the intensity of diversity, people in this area generally get on. This sort of banal and fleeting rubbing together which I have shown in my fieldnotes above have been described in terms of ‘prosaic multicultural’ (Amin 2002: 959), ‘banal intercultural interaction’ (Sandercock 2003: 89), ‘commonplace diversity’ (Wessendorf 2010) and ‘civil-integration’ (Vertovec 2007). However, public demonstrations of conviviality might not reflect the private prejudiced views of the residents in South London as demonstrated in the upcoming subsection.

3.3.1 Some examples of local discourses of ethnicities

This subsection provides two examples of how local discourses of ethnicities might be circulated by the residents in this locality. During my period of fieldwork, I routinely walk across the street from my research site to buy coffee from a restaurant owned by a couple in their 40s who originated from Ethiopia. The husband is known locally as Tony, a PhD student at SOAS. I found out later that his real name is Tsegay but according to him, *‘Everybody here calls me Tony!’* (Field notes 11/10/13). A very charming man, we usually talk about UK politics whilst he makes my coffee. Upon discovering that I’m a fellow PhD student, he asked me about my work and I told him that I was researching the nature of Somali ethnicities among a group of people at my site. Upon hearing this, his wife, Sumeya said, *‘Somalis? Why Somalis? Hrmmp!’* with a disapproving look (Field notes 11/10/13). She didn’t seem to be impressed with my rationale for doing this study and after a moment of awkward silence, I paid for my drink and made my way to the centre. I initially felt a bit uneasy about the encounter above and I assumed that the response shown by Sumeya was related to the history of border skirmishes between Ethiopia and Somalia. During the subsequent weeks, I wanted to ask Sumeya about her reaction, but the café is a busy place and there were limited opportunities to talk apart from exchanging pleasantries. About a month after the initial encounter, I went to Tony’s restaurant as usual for my cup of excellent coffee. Sumeya was behind the counter and

after we exchanged pleasantries, she asked me if I was going to the ‘Somali school’ and when I replied in the affirmative, she responded by saying

Why do Somalis and Bengalis get so much funding for their schools? They are all on benefits and we never get anything, I have to pay for private tuition for my boys to learn Ethiopian and for their schoolwork. We don’t get anything. I never received any benefits and Tony worked hard to pay his tuition fees at SOAS (Field notes 07/12/14)

I responded by informing her that the school is part-funded by the parents as they do pay some fees. Sumeya didn’t seem to be convinced with my response and after I paid her for my coffee, I walked across the street. The above encounter shows how local discourses of Somalis might be circulated. I am not proposing that historical hostilities between groups of people are not played out in their migratory destinations, but one should take the time to understand how the locale affects or creates some of these tensions. From my many conversations with them, I noted that as first-generation Ethiopian immigrants, Sumeya and Tsegay appear to be doing well in the host country. They are self-employed business owners and Sumeya and Tsegay also display bourgeoisie sensibilities such as an orientation towards higher education. Tsegay is a self-funded PhD student at a reputable London university whilst Sumeya holds a master’s degree from a UK university. This couple worked hard to cultivate this orientation on their children as Tsegay often complained about having to pay exorbitant fees for their private tuition and that he gets tired of ferrying them to these classes. To a large extent, Sumeya and Tsegay’s achievements as first-generation immigrants fits well with mainstream British politics and Sumeya appears to have also appropriated some contemporary discourses that view recipients of welfare benefits with disapproval. Her view on the topic of welfare benefits aligns with certain UK newspapers such as the Daily Mail and the Telegraph. As regards Sumeya’s utterances above, it appears that she has contrasted her family from ‘other’ immigrant groups such as Somalis and Bengalis who were perceived to have been given a range of benefits. Her use of the personal pronoun ‘we’ referred to her family and Ethiopians in general who did not receive assistance from the state. In addition, her words position Somalis and Bengalis as the freeloading and undeserving poor who drain public funds. Sumeya’s utterances are also reminiscent of a common trope that is in circulation in the UK society about working class immigrants with large families on a range of benefits. The phenomenon of members of ethnic minority groups that scapegoat ‘other’ ethnic minorities and attach negative labels on to them was also reported in Evans’s (2003) ethnographic study of Bermondsey. She discovered Bengali residents in Bermondsey who regularly use a set of local racist discourse to apportion blame on to

members of ‘other’ minority groups (Evans 2003). Although it is not surprising to discover that people have prejudices about everyone else, South London white working-class utterances appear to shape how these prejudices are articulated by members of ethnic minority groups in this locale. In this example, Sumeya’s perspective on Somali and Bengali immigrants in receipt of welfare benefits might have been shaped by local South London discourses as in the adjacent area of Bermondsey,

needy newcomers are condemned for using and having privileged access to the services, like affordable council housing, which real Bermondsey people feel they and their families ought to be able to benefit from. Those outsiders who arrive and are in need have become synonymous in Bermondsey people’s eyes with immigrants (Evans 2003: 198).

To reach my research site after getting my coffee, I typically cross Camberwell Road to enter Broomfield Estate (anonymised). Comprising five rows of yellow bricked flats, I routinely see residents of multi ethnic backgrounds doing their everyday routine such as cleaning the windows and watering their plants. On a particular day, as I walked past the concrete basketball court in the middle of the estate, two black teenage boys came up to me and one of them said ‘*Oi! Ni Hao* (Are you well in Mandarin Chinese)! *You got DVDs?*’ (Field notes 12/04/14). After I responded by saying ‘No, I haven’t got any’, the boys laughed and walked away. In this fleeting encounter, the boy used a form of multi-ethnic vernacular to communicate with me. Opening the utterance with the interjection ‘*Oi*’ to gain my attention, the boys used the Mandarin Chinese greeting phrase ‘*Ni Hao*’, perhaps due to my appearance which suggested to them that I am a person of Chinese ethnic descent. The question of whether I have pirated DVDs for sale suggests that people of Chinese ethnic descent in this locality were associated with this illegal practice in the locality. The examples of local discourses of ethnicities that I have offered in this subsection suggest that habitual contact between different groups of people in this locality in itself does not necessarily lead to cultural exchange, but rather, may ‘entrench group animosities and identities, through repetitions of gender, class, race, and ethnic practices’ (Amin 2002: 969). The upcoming section provides a general description of my research site’s physical space and its participants. It also shows how local council funding policy play a part in creating ethnic differences.

3.4 The specificities of my research site

Having provided the reader with a snapshot of how people of diverse ethnic backgrounds in this locale jostle in their day to day lives, I will now focus on the specificities of my research site. My research was conducted at a Somali community centre that serves a group of South London residents who accept the label ‘Somali’. This group of South Londoners of Somali descent (SLS) were regular participants in my research site. The community centre is operated by a caretaker named Farhan (48 years old, male) who receives a salary from the local council for the management and upkeep of the organisation. On most weekends, the centre’s space is used as a school that offers English, Maths and Science tuition for school children from Year 5 to Year 11. The syllabi for the subjects are driven by the UK national curriculum. During my period of fieldwork, these subjects were delivered by a group of teachers comprising of Mohamed (English teacher, 47 years old, Somali descent, male), Axmaadeey (Maths teacher, 45 years old, Somali descent, male) and I (English teacher, 45 years old, Chinese descent, male) . In the following subsections, I provide descriptions of the nature of the physical space within my research site and the ways local council policies constrain the ethnic make-up of its participants at my research site.

3.4.1 The spatial organisation of the research context

My research site occupies a unit on the ground floor and it is a space that is sectioned into two areas. Upon entering the reception area, a bulletin board on the left is affixed with flyers that are printed in English and Somali languages to inform their audience about upcoming Somali community events in South London. There is also a flyer that advertises the courses that are offered by the Al-Bakr school in the vicinity. This particular flyer is printed in English and Arabic. These visible linguistic codes in the centre hints at the public Somali communicative habits in this locality that includes the linguistic codes of Somali, English and Arabic. The ways that these codes emerge in my informants’ rooted communicative behaviour will be discussed in Chapter 6. Parallel to the left side of the entrance is the receptionist’s desk. Adjacent to this desk is the area reserved for some of the participants who observe the Muslim ritual of prayers. The ways that some of these prayer rituals were enacted will be shown in Chapter 5. Beside this space is a large table that accommodates about 15 children with a large flip board at one end. Behind the

receptionist's table is a space with two medium sized tables and chairs with a flip board beside the large windows that look out into the street. There are also 4 PC terminals on each corner and this space is sectioned off by office dividers that are about four feet tall. There is also a small refrigerator with a small cabinet on its side which houses a kettle and an assortment of jars containing coffee, tea, sugar and biscuits. This subsection has described the spatial configuration and the linguistic codes that were visible in the signs that were displayed on the walls of my research site. This space serves as the backdrop for the ways that the nature of Somali ethnicities was declared and enacted in my informants' practices and self-declarations. The following subsection shows how local funding policies were complicit in construing a general perception that Somalis were unable or unwilling to integrate.

3.4.2 Somali ethnicities as construed by local council policies

This subsection shows how local council policies might have created an insular, bounded view of people of Somali descent in this locality. The centre's name originally included the word 'refugee' and although most of the people who used to access the centre were people of Somali ethnicity, Mohamed told me that a group of Muslim students from multi-ethnic backgrounds regularly attended the classes. Due to changes in Government policy, this funding was removed in 2011. In 2012, Mohamed discovered alternative funding schemes with a focus on community integration. As innovative operators, Mohamed and Axmaadeey swiftly rebranded the research site by including the words 'development' and 'integration' to the name of the organisation. This rebranding exercise resulted in their successful application for some funding from the local council. However, one of the stipulations is that the school exclusively serves the local Somali community and the number of students who attend the school must meet a certain quota. This revelation was intriguing as it appears that local authority funding policy restrictions has prevented the participation of non-Somalis at the community centre in this locality. In this light, the outcome of council funding has construed Somalis as a group of people who were unwilling to integrate but in this particular instance, the participants at my site were *prevented* from integrating with people of different ethnicities. In this way, funding policies have created new forms of exclusion and 'difference' among ethnic groups. As Hewitt (2005) argues, ethnic

difference is often created by council policy and the press. It is, in the usual sociological sense, a ‘construction’- and in this ‘creation of difference’, communities are often set against each other, or in a new third sense, ‘racialised’ through an act of conceptual engineering (Hewitt 2005: 99).

The rationale behind the funding criteria could be the effect of several dynamics. Firstly, as I have mentioned in chapter one, Somalis in the UK have been treated as a homogenous and socially problematic community as mainstream media and policy frequently associates Somalis with youth gangs, crime and high levels of unemployment. Second, following the July 2005 terror attacks in London, there is a growing anti-Muslim sentiment as well as a public rhetoric which has connected people who pledge allegiance to Islam as a collective that is perceived to create problems with regard to national security, integration and social cohesion. People who signify their religious affiliations to Islam in their clothing and practices are viewed as visible signs of difference, and as a symbol of Islam’s incompatibility with British national identity and values but more importantly, British Muslims are viewed as potential threats to national security. This rhetoric has included Somalis in this simplistic portrayal as Liberatore (2013) notes that the UK spy agency MI5 advertised for Somali Language Analysts in an East London paper. Liberatore’s (2013) informants were

offended by the British government’s aim to recruit “insiders” to supposedly “spy” on potential Somali terrorists; to them it promoted the negative construal of Somalis as violent Islamist militants...it revealed the government’s excessive emphasis on visible signs of difference, and a stereotypical and un-informed understanding of Somali culture, and of the lives of second-generation Somalis in contemporary Britain (Liberatore 2013:15).

In this light, Somalis’ perceived strong allegiance to Islam has been straightforwardly associated with extremism. As a result, public funding policies have constructed a boundary to prevent Somalis from engaging with other groups of people. This section has provided the reader with a sense of the space in which my research site is located. This Somali community centre operates as a weekend school which is driven by the UK national syllabi with a specific focus on Maths, English and Science for schoolchildren from the age of 6 to 17 years old. It has also shown how council policy has created a view of Somalis as belonging to a bounded group who are unwilling to integrate.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to show how specificities of place matters in the study of Somali ethnicities in the UK. It has shown how local conditions in this area have been shaped by the specificities of its historical and contemporary social setting. As an area that has been traditionally associated with the poor white working classes, this area has gone through processes of change in regard to the social demographics of its residents. An analysis of the visible signs that were emplaced in this area has also shown the diverse nature of its residents and the types of organisations and businesses in this locality have also provided some indexical information about the cultural practices of its residents. As shown in section 3.2, the single shop with a visible marker of Somali ownership reflects the low number of Somalis in this locality. I have also shown how a token act of public civility that might have been cultivated by the repeated intermingling of cultures in this area. However, as I have also shown, public acts of civility resulting from habitual interactions in public spaces might obscure the private prejudiced views of people of certain ethnicities. Finally, this chapter has also argued that the general perception of Somalis as belonging to a bounded and insular group was in part created by local council policy. In sum, this chapter has provided the context in which my research site is located, namely in modern, superdiverse London. It has provided the basis for the argument contained in this thesis that Somali ethnicities must be understood in relation to the specificities of 'place'. In chapter 4, I will provide the reader with individual portraits of my informants by sketching their biographical trajectories.

Chapter 4: Individual portraits of South Londoners of Somali descent

Introduction

This chapter attempts to provide an understanding of the nature of Somali ethnicity by investigating my key informants' accounts of their biographical trajectories and everyday cultural practices. Here, I am offering descriptive portraits of my key research informants because this chapter argues for the importance of understanding how particular specificities of individual biographical trajectories shape a significant part of the nature of Somali ethnicities. These portraits show that it is problematic to apply a 'global' notion of Somali ethnicity in the contemporary conditions of superdiversity. In this undertaking, I provide the reader with individual portraits of my informants' self-accounts of their lived experiences and my observations of the ways they chose to present themselves at my research site. In chapter one, my review of the research literature has shown how *all* Somalis in the UK have been broad brushed as members of a culturally homogenous collective who speak the same language (Ahmed and Green 1999, Harris 2004). Further, Somalis in the UK have been construed as a group who are permanently afflicted by a set of social problems- such as unemployment and low rates of pay (Kyambi 2005)- which is directly linked to their shared Muslim religiosity (Change 2009, Jordan 2001). However, my small ethnographic study of a group of South Londoners of Somali (SLS) descent at a specific research site challenge this essentialised perspective. Some of my key research informants' have lived cosmopolitan experiences prior to the conflict in Somalia and they are mobile and resourceful subjects. This widely travelled group of SLS had to immerse themselves in the social, linguistic and cultural practices in the countries that they have lived prior to their arrival at South London. My informants' travel itineraries warrant close inspection, because as Blommaert and Backus (2012) argue,

[o]ur lives develop along trajectories of mobility, in which we encounter, leave, learn and unlearn social and cultural forms of knowledge (such as languages) because we need to be able to make sense of ourselves (Blommaert and Backus 2012: 29)

Blommaert and Backus's (2012) argument articulates the importance of investigating the effects of SLS' places of origin and trajectories of mobility on their social self-positionings vis-a-viz Somali ethnicity and on their self-declared stances on a set of traditional cultural practices. As this chapter will show, my informants' unique trajectories of mobility have formed particular linguistic repertoires resulting from the

types of education and social environments that they experienced. As such, my informants' linguistic repertoires provide evidence of the cultural and social realms they have had to circumnavigate in their lives. These same repertoires also reveal the language resources that are available for SLS to articulate their social and cultural identities to the people they encounter. SLS' repertoires point to the trajectories that they have followed throughout their lives, the privileges that they have enjoyed and the challenges that they have faced or are currently facing. As Blommaert and Backus (2012) argue,

[r]epertoires enable us to document in great detail the trajectories followed by people throughout their lives: the opportunities, constraints and inequalities they were facing, the learning environments they had access to (and those they did not have access to), (Blommaert and Backus 2012: 30)

Blommaert and Backus's (2012) argument provides valuable insights that guide this chapter. SLS' social class background, access to education and exposure to languages were indexed by their unique linguistic repertoires. Such vital details have not previously been sufficiently investigated by the UK research literature on the nature of Somali ethnicities. To offer the reader a sense of the complex trajectories of mobility among SLS, I have chosen to sketch ten brief portraits of my key informants (3 adult members of staff and 7 students). These portraits are illustrated by my informants' self-accounts of their places of origin, trajectories of mobility, attachment to the homeland and traditional cultural practices and linguistic repertoires. To further aid the precision of the individual portraits, I have also supplemented the upcoming with my ethnographic observations of the ways that my informants have chosen to present themselves to me. The following portraits suggest that among adult SLS, the nature of Somali ethnicities is constituted by a person's place of origin, language, connections with the homeland and the observance of a set of traditional cultural practices. Among most young SLS, notions of Somali ethnicity have been transmitted by their parents or carers but, most of them demonstrate a hazy understanding of what it entails.

Axmaadeey (Male, 43 years old, senior Maths teacher)

Axmaadeey is a tall man with broad shoulders honed by many hours of lifting weights at his home and he perpetually sported an unkempt moustache and beard. At the research site, he communicated his Muslim identity by his typical attire consisting of a white

rounded skullcap and a white long tunic⁷ over dark trousers. He typically projected a stern demeanour during his interactions with the students and he was known as ‘the enforcer’ among the members of staff. Students who breach the rules of social conduct at the school were routinely subjected to a disciplinary discussion with Axmaadeey. At the time of my research, Axmaadeey lived with his family consisting of his wife and five children in a South London housing estate. During that period, he was employed in the education profession as an A Levels Maths teacher at a local South London school. To supplement his income, Axmaadeey also works as a Maths teacher at the research site on the weekends in addition to giving private tuition at his flat.

Axmaadeey was born in Somaliland where he lived for the first 10 years of his life. When he was six years old, a private tutor used to visit his home several times a week to teach him Maths and Classical Arabic⁸ to read the Quran. Axmaadeey’s father used to own a thriving business which imported spices from Egypt to Somaliland. In 1981, Axmaadeey’s father decided to move his family to Cairo to operate as an agent for other importers in Somaliland. His family stayed in Cairo for about six years and during this period, Axmaadeey and his siblings attended a private school with Standard Arabic as the language of instruction. In 1986, Axmaadeey was 16 years old when his father decided to uproot from Cairo to Bangalore in India for ‘business reasons’. In Bangalore, his education continued in a private secondary school where he completed his A Levels in 1991 at the age of 20 years old. At the outbreak of the civil war in Somalia, his father decided to send Axmaadeey and his brothers to seek asylum in the UK. Upon their successful application for asylum, Axmaadeey and his brothers settled in London. In London, Axmaadeey had to make significant efforts to gain a university degree. He had to retake his A Levels at a private college because institutions of higher learning in the UK did not recognise his qualifications from India. He finally gained admission to a London university in 1992 and graduated with a Business Studies degree in 1996. Upon achieving his university degree, Axmaadeey took his father’s advice to search for employment opportunities in Qatar but he encountered obstacles as his status as a British native speaker was repeatedly questioned by potential employers:

⁷ The significance of his attire as a visible marker of his religious allegiance will be discussed in chapter 4)

⁸ Ferguson (1959) first described Arabic as a ‘diglossic’ language to highlight its distinct written and spoken forms. Haeri (2003) observed that Egyptians use spoken Egyptian Arabic for almost all their everyday interactions and that the usage of Classical Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic is limited mainly to the religious realm and news media respectively (Haeri, 2003: 38, 42).

I decided to leave because although I had a British passport, they asked if I was a native. I said I'm not a native but I teach natives. (laughs) so I'm the master, what more do you want? (Conversational Interview 18/04/14)

Although he was frustrated by his failure to secure employment, Axmaadeey met his wife in Qatar. She is a person of Somali descent who was born in Qatar. In 1998, Axmaadeey returned to the UK with his wife and they have lived in several localities in South London. In summary, Axmaadeey was born in Somaliland, lived there until the age of 10 and has spent extended periods of time in Egypt, India and Qatar. His trajectory of mobility points to the fact that Axmaadeey has spent most his adult life away from Somaliland. However, Axmaadeey thinks his connections with his place of birth is an important aspect of his Somali ethnicity. He has maintained his ties by spending considerable amounts of money on his annual holidays to Somaliland. Cultivating family ties is significant for Axmaadeey and he tried to transmit this aspect of Somali ethnicity to his children. In his words,

one year my wife and the whole family went home I wanted them to connect with the family with Somalia and at least know about life there I worked here they enjoyed it they have to connect with their roots [Conversational interview 18/04/14]

In Axmaadeey's view, his children's roots are firmly located at his place of birth. Even though his children were born and raised in the UK, Axmaadeey views his place of origin as a crucial indicator of his children's Somali ethnicity. Axmaadeey's connections with his place of origin parallels Hammond's (2013) study which reported that it is common practice for Somalilanders to return to the homeland for extended periods during to visit relatives and to 'reconnect with their Somali roots' (Hammond 2013: 1010).

Somali is Axmaadeey's first language and it was the dominant language used by his family at home. For Axmaadeey, Somali language is an all-encompassing marker of Somali ethnicity:

your language is your identity without your language you're nothing once you lose your language that's it you lose your culture some parents think why learn Somali they're not using it here they're here I think wherever you are your language is important I speak Somali to my kids at home, you can ask Abuubakar (Interview 18/04/14)

In Axmaadeey's account above, Somali language⁹ is inextricably intertwined with the nature of Somali ethnicity. However, it would also appear that there were multiple dialects of Somali language as Axmaadeey's family communicated in what he describes as 'nomad Somali pure like honey' [Conversational interview 12/11/13] in their daily interactions. It is unclear what he specifically meant by 'nomad Somali' but as Lamberti (1986) points out, the Northern Somali dialect group consists of the Issa, Gadabursi and the Issaq dialects that were used by nomadic tribes in the region. Lewis (1980) has observed that the most significant dialect difference is

between the speech of the northern pastoralists and the Digil and Ree-Win cultivators. These differ to much the same extent as Portuguese and Spanish (Lewis 1980: 5)

Lamberti (1986) further noted that dialects are associated with clans and despite mass displacement and the coming together of multiple clans, the dialects have largely retained their characteristics. In this light, Axmaadeey's view of the language aspect of Somali ethnicity is directly linked to the dialects of a group of clans that practice the nomadic way of life in Somaliland. Axmaadeey also thinks that his dialect is a different version from the urban Somali register that is used in Mogadishu. He finds it difficult to comprehend 'Mogadishu Somali' because it has been 'mixed with all the dialects from different tribes' (Conversational interview 12/11/13). The Somali¹⁰ language that is used in Mogadishu is viewed to be impure, an amalgam of multiple dialects. Axmaadeey's stance confirms Andindilile's (2014) observation that the linguistic situation in Somalia is complex as there are 'dialects and social registers representing different social groups within the same ethnic groups, marking off urbanites from rural dwellers' (Andindilile 2014: 264). As a reflection of Lewis's (1980) and Andindilile's (2014) observations above, Axmaadeey's assessment of his lack of proficiency in the non-Somaliland dialects is unremarkable. He has been immersed in a North Somali dialect that was used by his family members and the group of people he is closely connected with. However, his alignment with the dialects of Somaliland is also suggestive of his distancing from the dialects that were practiced by the people who live in South Somalia.

⁹ The Somali language is divided into different dialects, the principal division between the people living in the north and the south (Knight 2001: 81).

¹⁰ Kusow (1994) notes that 'successive Somali governments and scholars of Somali studies have downplayed the existence and the significance of different linguistic groups within the Somali people [but] a closer look will reveal different picture' (Kusow 1994).

The private secondary school that Axmaadeey attended in Bangalore provided his first exposure to English in a formal learning environment. His father chose to enrol Axmaadeey and his siblings in a private school because the State schools that he attended in India did not use English as the medium of instruction. His father thought ‘it wasn’t useful to learn their language’ (Conversational interview 18/04/14). Axmaadeey holds the English language education that he received in India with high regard. He also considers the version of English that he learned in India to be authentic and is superior to the register that is commonly used by children in the UK:

The teachers in India are proper English teachers you know we had so many hours of grammar lessons these kids nowadays can’t speak proper English, even Abuubakar always likes to use slang (Conversational Interview 18/04/14)

Axmaadeey’s words expressed his view that the formal English instruction that he received in India to be the authentic variety of English. His opinion reflects the common perception that those fluent in Standard English are admired for being ‘intelligent, efficient and educated’ (Rampton 2003: 52). What Axmaadeey did not realize is that ‘proper’ or Standard English is not commonly used for social interaction among young people.

As I pointed out earlier, Axmaadeey’s attachment to Islam is indexed by his way of dressing. Axmaadeey places great importance on instilling religious practices in his children and he has a traditional view on how family units should be structured. For him, the lack of religious guidance and the problem of single parents among some Somali families are contributing factors to some of the social problems that are faced by a section of Somali youth in the UK. As Axmaadeey puts it,

Axmaadeey: Some of them are religious and do well some of the families raised them well and the practice is sustained but some of them fall into the melting pot and the families realise that they are losing battle some of them alcoholics, drug addicts and when they reach 18 they end up in jail that’s the sad sad fact that Somalis have faced here.

Steve: How big is this problem?

Axmaadeey: There are a high percentage not like what the newspaper say but I know first-hand that out of 20 Somali students in year 11, 4 have been detained that’s 20 percent and now the problem is so bad that some parents take them out of the country to avoid the system they know they not gonna last in jail there’s no way back if you’re registered in the justice system, no jobs and you have to say that you have a record your life is destroyed you have to declare actually the problem is that many of them are raised by a single parent, the mother [Conversational interview 18/04/14]

In Axmaadeey's quote above, Somali youth's problems with drugs and alcohol consumption were directly linked to the corrupting influences of the UK social environments. For him, it is the UK context that has somehow 'spoilt' a section of the Somali youth.

At the time of my fieldwork, Axmaadeey claims to live his everyday life almost exclusively within the South London locality in which he resides with his family. He explained that upon his return from Qatar, he taught ICT at a college in Westminster. However, after the 7th July 2005 terror attacks in London, he felt that his movements were restricted due to racial profiling by the London police:

after the 7/7 bombings was a hassle I was always late to class because they had to stop and check me because I look like a terrorist (laughs) I got fed up every day my backpack is searched stop and search diversions all the time so I think I'll better go back to South London [Conversational interview 18/04/14].

At the time of my fieldwork, Axmaadeey had been working as an A Levels Maths teacher at a South London school for over five years. During this period, Axmaadeey was recommended for a promotion to head the Maths department. However, Axmaadeey recognises the challenges that the position entails and he turned it down. As he puts it,

lots of times they offer me if I want to be promoted but I declined because you spend lots of time preparing documents day in day out so I said no whatever income I get from this I get more from my private teaching so I do alright they offered me head of ICT I said no head of year 8 Maths I said no what I learned is whenever you climb higher you are more exposed there's so much stress you can see they can't cope so I am not stupid I can move around I live within my means I have no mortgage so they said they will pay me 2.5% increase on my salary if I took the job I calculated I say 2.5% per year that's £1300 40% of tax and then another 10% NI which leaves me with £650 per year I said divide that by the hours that I have to put in you get so I say no thanks (shrugs and laughs) he said that's the problem with Maths teachers they can count (laughs) [Conversational interview 18/04/14].

Axmaadeey's words above expresses his adeptness at evaluating the merits of his offer of promotion as a head of department at his institution. He knows that the financial reward that he could attain does not justify the amount of work he must put in. In contrast to the dominant literature, Axmaadeey's account of his employment experiences contrasts with the reported difficulties with employment and low rates of pay that is viewed to permanently afflict Somalis in the UK (Kyambi 2005).

Country	Length of stay	Age at departure	Lived experiences/ access to education	Languages used/ learned
Somaliland	10 years (1971-1981)	10 years old	Childhood, Private tuition	Somali and Arabic
Egypt	5 years (1981-1986)	16 years old	Private schooling	Somali, Arabic
India	5 years (1986-1991)	20 years old	Private secondary school	Somali, Arabic, English
UK	23 years (1991-1995, 1997-2014)	20 -24 years old 26 -44 years old	Gained a university degree, works as an A Levels Maths teacher	English/Somali/Arabic
Qatar	2 years (1995-1997)	26 years old	Worked as a part-time teacher	Somali, Arabic

Table 3: Axmaadeey's biographical trajectory

As demonstrated in the table above, Axmaadeey's route to the UK involved travelling across Egypt and India. Before embedding himself in South London, he has also spent two years in Qatar. His linguistic repertoire reflects the languages that he had encountered as a child in Somalia, formal learning in Egypt, India and the UK. By analysing his trajectory of mobility, it is also evident that Axmaadeey comes from a family with considerable wealth as he has been given private tuition as a child and he had access to private education in Egypt and India. In line with the literature that I have reviewed in chapter one, his idea of Somali ethnicity is related to connections with the homeland and strong religious allegiance to Islam. However, instead of the notion of 'one' Somali language as reported by most of the research literature, Axmaadeey's notion of Somali language is linked to the dialect that is used by a particular group of people in Somaliland.

This Somali dialect is construed by him as the authentic version that is specific to his place of origin and is made distinct from the version(s) that are created by the effects of contact between diverse dialects belonging to people that live in urban areas. Further, in contrast to some of the existing UKS research literature (Jordan 2004, Change Institute 2009) his adherence to a set of traditional Somali cultural practices and his deep attachments to Islam did not appear to hamper his ability to be gainfully employed in the education profession. He is well-educated, and he is adept at moving across multiple social realms in his daily encounters in London.

Mohamed (Male, Manager, English teacher, 47 years old)

Mohamed is a short and rotund man with a receding hairline who likes to keep his moustache smartly trimmed. Like Axmaadeey, his allegiance to Islam is projected by wearing a round skullcap by default. However, Mohamed vacillated between projecting a contemporary cosmopolitan¹¹ identity by dressing in freshly pressed formal long sleeve shirts and smart trousers and a traditional Muslim identity by wearing knee length tunics. Further, unlike Axmaadeey, Mohamed wore dark coloured tunics instead of white ones. When I questioned Mohamed about the significance of this observation, he laughed and said ‘I’m more fashion conscious’ [Fieldnotes 12/11/13]. Although Mohamed laughed off my observation, his preference for dark tunics could be a sign that he does not share Axmaadeey’s strict observance of a particular strand of teaching of Islam. Mohamed is a popular English teacher at my research site as he projects a friendly persona due to the perpetual smile on his face. He is an extrovert, articulate and is well respected by the participants at my research site. The students typically seek Mohamed to request permission to leave early or for advice. In London, Mohamed lives with his wife and three children in a modest flat in South London and during my fieldwork, he was employed by one of the local council authorities as a coordinator in a department which assists people to seek gainful employment.

¹¹ As Brennan puts it, ‘cosmopolitanism designates an enthusiasm for customary differences, but as ethical or aesthetic material for a unified polychromatic culture - a new singularity born of a blending and merging of multiple local constituents’ (Brennan cited in Calhoun 91)

Like Axmaadeey, Mohamed was born in Somaliland, but he grew up in Mogadishu because of his father's business interests. Mohamed recalled that the first language he learned was a Somaliland dialect that were spoken by his family. When he was about five years old, he was exposed to Classical Arabic by a private tutor who visited their home once a week. At the age of six, Mohamed attended a private Italian school¹² which used Italian as the medium of instruction. Upon completing his primary school at the age of 12, he partly attended the first year of his secondary education in another Italian private school before his family relocated to Egypt. In sum, Mohamed had attended formal education in Italian private schools for a total of seven years, but he claimed to have minimal competence in the language. Although Mohamed might not have maximum proficiency in Italian, it does not seem plausible that he is illiterate in the language after seven years of formal education. As a person who was born in Somaliland, it is more likely that he is distancing himself from the language of the Italian colonial power¹³ that ruled much of South Somalia.

Before he could complete his secondary education in Mogadishu, Mohamed's father decided to move his family to Cairo¹⁴ in 1982 to search for business opportunities. At the age of 13, Mohamed attended a private secondary school¹⁵ with Arabic as the medium of instruction. However, after three years of schooling in Cairo, his father was alarmed that Mohamed and his siblings lacked proficiency in English language. In 1985, his father remained in Cairo, but he dispatched Mohamed and his six siblings to Kenya for the specific purpose of enhancing their English language skills. Mohamed was 16 years old and, in his words,

I was schooled in a private school for a year I improved my English, but academic English was lacking and he was paying USD4500 for each one of us and there were 7 of us [Conversational interview 18/04/14]

Due to the prohibitive costs of private education, Mohamed's father decided to apply for his family to be naturalised as Kenyans for the children to gain admission into public

¹² The small elite groups in Somalia were traditionally educated in either English or Italian private schools (Laitlin 1977).

¹³ Further, Farah (1994) argues that the 'Italian colonial presence, which brought about massive changes.... After all, it was Italy that recruited many Somalis into its army to fight in its colonial war of expansion into Ethiopia' (1994: 11) .

¹⁴ Cairo is an urban hub for international migration in Africa and the Middle East and Somalis have been reported to congregate here prior to their journey to other locations (Pascucci 2016:328)

¹⁵ In Cairo, Somali families with the financial means often enrol their children in private schools and thereby provide them with better opportunities for continuing their studies in the West (Al Sharmani 2007).

schools. For Mohamed, his formal learning experience in a Kenyan public school for two years helped to develop his proficiency in English:

that's where I learned, I mastered the debate of speaking English because I don't know any other language. They speak Farubo, Swahili and the language of instruction was only in English so since I didn't know the 2 other languages, I was forced to speak every day and night I was speaking English I was practising English day and night and so I improved my English language [Conversational interview 18/04/14]

Mohamed's account of his achievements in English after attending a private school for a year and a State school for two years is hardly plausible. Mohamed speaks and writes English at a high standard but his expertise in the language was likely to have been honed during the upcoming migration transits in his travel itinerary.

At the outbreak of the civil war in Somalia, his father dispatched Mohamed and three of his brothers to seek asylum in Canada because his uncles and cousins were naturalised Canadian nationals. Their move reflects Al Sharmani (2007) findings on the ways Somalis 'strategize with their relatives, pool resources, share obligations, and arrange for the movements of individual family members' (Al Sharmani 2007:1). Upon arrival in Canada, they lived with Mohamed's uncle in Calgary. Mohamed initially could not afford to further his studies, but he saved money by working as a limousine driver for more than three years. By 1992, Mohamed could afford to enrol in an English Literature degree programme at a university in Calgary at the age of 24 years old. In 1996, he graduated and took his mother's advice to look for employment opportunities in America. In America, Mohamed found employment in Ohio as a teacher in a secondary school. In Ohio, he met his wife when she was on a holiday to visit her relatives. She is a British national who was born in Somaliland. He wanted to settle down in Ohio but his wife's application to be naturalized as an American citizen encountered complications. Reluctantly, Mohamed followed her to the UK in 2000. Since then, he has lived in various areas in London prior to his current location in Southeast London.

For Mohamed, Somali language is a crucial aspect of Somali ethnicity and he claims to have successfully transmitted Somali to his children by policing the language use in his home space:

You know my son Jaffar he speaks Somali better than people in Mogadishu we only speak the pure Somali at home when my kids went home they could speak with the elders but

some of the parents here are rubbish you know, Asad the one in your class can't speak a word of Somali [Conversational interview 18/04/14]

Mohamed's words espouse the importance of being able to speak Somali language as a marker of his ethnicity. However, like Axmaadeey, he has also valorised his dialect and distances himself from the version of Somali language that was used in Mogadishu. In fact, the version that is used in Mogadishu forms the basis of Standard Somali as Lamberti (1986) points out that the Darood dialects from the Mudug region and the western parts of the Somali areas became the benchmark for the form of language in school textbooks and broadcasting. In this light, even though Mohamed has spent his childhood in Mogadishu, his Somaliland dialect viewed to be the pure version. He does not align with the standard form of Somali language. Further, for him, the ability to speak in his Somali dialect performs an important function, it facilitates communication with 'the elders'. Mohamed has also blamed the unremarkable phenomenon of language shift from the mother tongue to English among Somali children in the UK on their parents' inability to transfer what he views to be an important aspect of Somali ethnicity. His account of the importance of maintaining Somali language parallels Sporton and Valentine's (2007) findings among first generation Somali immigrants in the UK.

Mohamed values his enduring connections with the homeland and the traditional practice of respecting the elder members of the community. Like Axmaadeey, he makes annual visits to Somaliland to strengthen his connections:

you know I got to see my land and pay respects to the elders you know it's important for Somalis that's the problem with Somalis here the young don't understand how important it is to listen to the elders they get into drugs and drinking here outside influence is more important hmmph (Interview 18/04/14)

In the above, Mohamed communicated his yearning for the traditional ways of life in which elders of the society wield considerable influence. He subscribes to the idea that respecting and taking advice from community elders is paramount for Somalis. In addition, the problems that Somali youths are reported to face were blamed on 'outside influence', implying that life in modern day UK has had a corrosive influence. His stance on the problems that a section of Somali youth face is aligned with Axmaadeey's view.

At my research site, Mohamed said he regularly attempts to transmit aspects of Somali cultural heritage to his students by using traditional folk stories in his classes:

You know I always use traditional Somali folk stories to in my classes hmm the parents never teach them ... at least here they get an idea of our culture our tradition (Interview 18/04/14)

In the above, Mohamed expressed his view that the Somali cultural tradition of folk stories to be a significant aspect of Somali ethnicity. He tries to connect his students to this aspect of Somali culture by inserting traditional folk stories¹⁶ to teach his classes.

In the preceding section, I have shown how Mohamed's notion of Somali ethnicity is indexed by one's proficiency in a Somali dialect, the maintenance of connections with the homeland and the transmission of traditional folk stories. Like Axmaadeey, Mohamed regularly proclaims his strong allegiance to Islam and he is especially fond of young SLS who practice and infer their affiliation with Islam at the site. In the extract below, Mohamed beamed with pride as he recalled how Abuubakar (male, student 16 years old) made references to Islam during a community congregation at a local mosque:

he will come to the podium and take the microphone to energise the parents and the whole community there, he would say, "**Takbeer! Takbeer!** (God is great in Arabic) my goodness his voice shot up the whole hallway... (Interview 18/04/14)

Here we can observe that Mohamed sees Abuubakar's references to Islam as exemplary behaviour for young SLS. However, not all of the student participants at the site subscribe to a world view that is contoured by Islam as chapter 5 reveals the tensions that emerge when Mohamed tried to enforce Islamic rituals on some of my informants.

In line with the UK research literature, Mohamed's self-accounts of the nature of Somali ethnicity is deeply connected to a set of traditional cultural practices and a religious allegiance to Islam. However, these attachments to tradition do not appear to hamper his ability to navigate the challenges of life in a modern society. In fact, Mohamed is a very

¹⁶ Somalis' literary tradition that includes poems, proverbs, metaphors and tales of wisdom were traditionally transmitted from father to son (Abokor 1987).

resourceful person who is experienced in overcoming obstacles in his everyday life in London. In his words,

You know the school lost the funding last year so they said they can't support refugee centres anymore so I did some research and changed our name after three months we got a bit of money from the council and the BBC Children in Need trust so Maacalin¹⁷ Mohamed saved the day (Interview 18/04/14)

In the above, Mohamed demonstrated his resourcefulness in realising that the centre's original name did not meet the changes in the UK political landscape in 2013-2014. To mitigate this problem, he adeptly changed the organization's name to adapt to the changing political landscape to secure some financial aid for the school.

Country	Length of stay	Age at departure	Lived experiences	Language(s) learned/used
Somalia	13 years	13 years old	Private school	Somali, Arabic, Italian
Egypt	3 years	16 years old	Private school	Somali, Arabic
Kenya	3 years	19 years old	Private and Kenya State schools	Somali, Arabic and English
Canada	8 years	27 years old	University education, worked part-time as a limousine driver	Somali, Arabic and English
USA	4 years	31 years old	Worked as a teacher in a secondary school in Ohio	Somali, Arabic and English
UK	14 years and counting	N/A	Worked as a teacher and various positions in the UK public sector	Somali, Arabic, English

Table 4: Mohamed's biographical trajectory

As the table above recapitulates, Mohamed's trajectory of mobility from Somaliland to his current location in South London involved travelling across multiple countries. It

¹⁷ (teacher in Somali)

began with his move to Mogadishu where he spent most of his childhood, three years in Egypt, three years in Kenya, eight years in Canada and four years in the USA. His experiences of communicating with his family and friends in Mogadishu, formal education and engagement in multiple social realms in various countries have helped to shape his linguistic repertoire consisting of a specific dialect of Somali originating from Somaliland, the Mogadishu ‘version’ of Somali language, Arabic, Italian and English. His father’s financial ability to afford private schooling for seven children over an extended period has also indicated Mohamed’s belonging to one of the elite groups in Somalia. In short, his notion of Somali ethnicity is constituted by language, maintaining connections with the homeland and religious allegiance to Islam. Like Axmaadeey, Mohamed is also a well-educated and savvy resident of South London.

Farhan (Male, centre director, 47 years old)

Farhan is a tall man who kept his moustache and beard neatly trimmed. During my fieldwork, Farhan made brief appearances at the research site on Saturday mornings to send his three daughters (5 to 11 years old) to attend the Maths and English sessions. At the site, he routinely wore a range of stylish dark coloured suits over freshly ironed shirts. His typical apparel is similar to the clothes that are commonly worn by office workers in the UK. Like Axmaadeey and Mohamed, his religious allegiance to Islam¹⁸ is signalled by wearing a white rounded skullcap. In addition to his role as one of the directors of the supplementary school, he also owns a small business which imports dried food items from Somaliland. At the site, Farhan is typically soft-spoken, but he projects a confident demeanour.

Farhan was born and raised in his place of birth in Somaliland until 1988. At the age of 16, his family escaped the civil war in Somalia by fleeing to Kenya. In 1989, his family moved to Saudi Arabia where they had stayed until their application for asylum was granted by the UK in 1990. Farhan is closely connected with his place of birth. Like Axmaadeey and Mohamed, he has spent considerable amounts of money to fund his family’s annual holidays in Somaliland:

¹⁸ The nature of Farhan’s religious allegiance to Islam as compared with Axmaadeey and Mohamed will be discussed in the subsequent chapter.

We used to go home every year but since we have three girls we go every two years the girls loved it they can run freely and play till the sun goes down it's safe not like here [Conversational interview 11/04/14]

Farhan's nostalgia for the perceived safe haven that life in his homeland provides is problematic. It partly stands in contradiction with his reason for fleeing the violent civil war in Somalia. Although he could be referring to the relative peace and stability that Somaliland had enjoyed over the preceding 15 years (Hammond 2013), he could easily uproot from London and return to the homeland. Farhan's starry-eyed view of life in his place of origin may have been enhanced by his privileged upbringing prior to the war:

I was happy in my village we had everything camels land everything we didn't even have to go far [Conversational interview 11/04/14]

Farhan's account of his childhood alludes to his privileged background in Somaliland. The ownership of camels is the most significant display of wealth among nomadic people in Somaliland (Laitlin 1977). However, in Farhan's account above, his family did not practice the nomadic way of life. His family were wealthy landowners who were settled in a specific location.

In Somaliland, Farhan learned Somali in informal learning environments as he recalled that his family and his peers used Somali exclusively in their daily interactions. For him, Somali language is a significant aspect of the nature of Somali ethnicity. However, like Axmaadeey and Mohamed, he conceded that he is only fluent in his dialect:

I can't understand the Somali in Mogadishu I can only speak the northern dialect
[Conversational interview 11/04/14]

Like Axmaadeey and Mohamed, Farhan's notion of Somali language is directly related to the northern dialect and he has also distanced himself from the Mogadishu dialect. Further, like Axmaadeey and Mohamed, Farhan claims to have transferred his proficiency in his Somali dialect to his children by regulating the language practices at his home. As he puts it,

at home my kids they speak in Somali only look my eldest daughter speaks better than some of the parents here you know that's the problem with Somalis we don't value our heritage [Conversational interview 11/04/14]

In the above extract, Farhan's efforts to maintain his Somali cultural heritage includes speaking to his children in Somali but as he pointed out in the preceding extract, he is specifically referring to his Northern Somali dialect and by extension, to his clan. Like Axmaadeey and Mohamed, he has also ascribed the lack of proficiency in Somali among some of the children at the supplementary school to their parents' failure to maintain the linguistic aspect of Somali cultural heritage.

The second language in Farhan's linguistic repertoire is Arabic. He said he did not attend formal schooling in Somaliland and like Axmaadeey, a private tutor used to visit his family home to teach him and his brothers to read and memorise the Quran in Classical Arabic. This private tutor also taught Maths and Science to Farhan. He also thinks that his knowledge of Standard Arabic was developed during his attendance at a private school for a year in Saudi Arabia. The third language in Farhan's linguistic repertoire is English. Although he is a fluent speaker, Farhan is very modest about his proficiency in English. He attributed this deficiency to the lack of formal learning in English prior to his arrival in the UK. Farhan's initial challenges with communicating in English reflects some of the findings highlighted by the research literature (Change Institute 2009, Harris 2004). However, Farhan was not permanently disabled by his lack of expertise in English. Upon his arrival in the UK, Farhan's father advised him to enrol in a private English language school:

My dad said let's not waste time get into a good English school [Conversational interview 11/04/14]

By taking his father's advice, Farhan attended several intensive English courses in private colleges across London for about five years. He thinks that he needs to improve his reading and writing skills in English but finds it difficult to attend classes due to his ongoing family and business commitments.

For Farhan, Somali ethnicity is also indexed by the traditional cultural practice of tribal affiliation. According to him, Somalis congregate along tribal lines:

You know we're all from the North here we're from the same tribe you know Somalis work with our own people (Interview 01/03/14).

In the above extract, Farhan's words conveyed the significance of clan affiliation among SLS in his revelation that the people who access the supplementary school were affiliated to a specific tribe in Somaliland. In addition, he explained that clan relations are maintained in the UK during congregations for celebrations and religious ceremonies:

We shut the school down when there are gatherings for the clan elders you remember we closed for two Saturdays last month yes we went to Sheffield for a wedding and then the following weekend for the prayers (Interview 01/03/14).

Farhan's accounts above confirms some of the findings in the research literature (Harris 2004, Griffiths 2002, Hopkins 2006) that argue for the salience of the Somali cultural tradition of clan affiliation in any understanding of Somali ethnicity. Although he observes clan related practices, Farhan also views it as the root cause of the civil war in Somalia:

You know the tribal war has created the fracturing of Somalia and the loss of its language and culture Steve we're a clan-based people that will never change they are just fighting for their own tribes and not seeing the big picture (Interview 01/03/14).

In the above accounts, Farhan has provided a view of Somali ethnicity that is tightly woven with clan affiliation. His view of clan affiliation as a primordial trait for Somalis also confirm the arguments posited by some of the literature on Somalia (Lewis 1961, 1998, Luling 2006).

Another aspect of traditional Somali cultural practice that Farhan reproduces is the notion of traditional gendered vocation:

You know I applied for job as a cashier then they said come in on Monday so I went and then the HR person said yes you'll be trained as a cashier next week we need you in the hygiene department now I told him to fuck off (laughs) no Somali man would ever clean toilets that's a woman's job [Conversational interview 11/04/14]

In the above extract, Farhan's resistance to accepting a mundane, low paid employment was attributed to the traditional Somali cultural practice of gendered vocations. He

attempts to reproduce this traditional view that is aligned with Farah's (2000) claims about traditional Somali gendered roles. Some of the tensions that emerged among young SLS when the notion of gendered vocation was introduced during one of the classroom discussions will be explored in the next chapter.

Country	Length of stay	Age on departure	Lived experiences	Languages used/learned
Somaliland	16 years	16 years old	Privately tutored in Maths and Classical Arabic	Somali, Arabic
Kenya	One year	17 years old	Refugee	Somali, Arabic
Saudi Arabia	One year	18 years old	Formal education in a private school	Somali, Arabic
UK	23 years	NA	Attended private intensive English classes, small business owner, director of the research site.	Somali, English, Arabic

Table 5: Farhan's biographical trajectory

To sum up, Farhan's migration to the UK involved travelling to Kenya and Saudi Arabia. His linguistic repertoire consists of a dialect of Somali, Classical and Standard Arabic and English. His expertise in his mother tongue was cultivated by his interactions in a specific dialect of Somali among his family members in a specific location in Somaliland for 16 years. He learned Classical Arabic from his private tutor for about 10 years and Standard Arabic by attending a school in Saudi Arabia for a year. Upon Farhan's arrival in the UK, English was added to his linguistic repertoire. In Farhan's accounts in the preceding paragraphs, his notion of Somali ethnicity is constituted by his place of origin, the ability to speak a specific Somali dialect, maintaining connections with the homeland and by observing clan related practices. As I have also shown, Farhan does not appear to suffer from severe financial hardship as his family frequently travel to Somalia, he owns a small business and he has been privately educated in Somalia, Saudi Arabia and in London.

Summarising comments of portraits of adult SLS

The preceding portraits of three adult SLS have revealed some commonalities among this group of informants. They were born in Somaliland and as a group, they are not a part of the downtrodden as their families owned profitable businesses that have generated considerable wealth. All three of them were privately educated in Somaliland and in the countries listed on their itineraries. They are resourceful and both Axmaadeey and Mohamed were gainfully employed by the UK public sector. Farhan is a small business owner in addition to acting as one of the directors of my research site. They position themselves as people who practice an authentic Somali culture while simultaneously operating as ‘savvy’ residents in London. Further, as a group, they have lived cosmopolitan experiences in multiple countries prior to their arrival in the UK. Axmaadeey’s and Mohamed’s family members were mobile subjects who travelled abroad in search of business opportunities before the civil war. At the onset of the conflict in Somalia, all three escaped the conflict with relative ease, they reached their targeted destinations via various migration trajectories. Their trajectories of mobility challenge the typical view of Somali migrants as a poverty-stricken group. As a group, the three adults maintain close connections with the homeland by making annual pilgrimages to pay their respect to the elders.

As a group, they view Somali language to be a crucial aspect of Somali ethnicity. However, as I have shown in the preceding section, they were referring to a Somali dialect specific to Somaliland. By extension, their references to the ‘Northern Somali’ dialect also communicate their affiliation to a group of clans that live in that region. Although none of them have actual lived experiences of pastoral life, ‘nomad Somali’ as a reference to their dialect suggests that for them, the nomadic way of life in Somaliland represents the authentic version of Somali ethnicity. The sense of being nomads and having a nomadic heritage appears so strong that it seems to have become a contemporary integrated part of the self among my informants. Their stances suggest that they were making distinctions between their Somaliland dialect and ‘Standard Somali’¹⁹. Their references to Somali language communicated their allegiance to Somaliland while distancing themselves from the dialects practiced by the central government and urban

¹⁹ Siyad Barre, the former president of Somalia introduced a variation of the Latin alphabet in October 1972, followed by an extensive campaign from 1973 to 1975 to teach the population to read and write (Warsame 2001, p. 351).

dwellers in Mogadishu. In short, their references to Somali language have generated a specific solidarity that is confined to people who speak a group of dialects in Somaliland. As Benedict Anderson points out,

the way most important thing about language is its capacity for generating imagined communities, building in effect particular solidarities (Anderson 1991: 133)

This group of adults also longs for Somali cultural practices in which elders within the community played a crucial role and they attempt to reproduce these practices in London. This group of adult SLS link the reported social problems that Somali youth have faced to the absence of respect to elders in contemporary UK. The tensions that emerge from their attempts to reproduce traditional respect to elders among young SLS will be explored in chapter 5.

The third aspect of Somali ethnicity that emerged from their accounts is their affiliation to their clan. As members of a clan originating from Somaliland, they congregate for religious celebrations, confirming some of the research reports (Griffiths 2002, Hopkins 2006) on the salience of clan affiliation for Somalis in the UK. Finally, among the three adult informants, a significant aspect of Somali ethnicity is the visible markers of their religious allegiances to Islam (Sporton and Valentine 2007, Change Institute 2009). However, this provides an incomplete picture as these adults' individual adherences to Muslim orthopraxy will be explored in chapter 5. For Axmaadeey and Mohamed, Islamic guidance could fortify Somali children against the corrosive influences they would inevitably encounter upon entry into a Western, liberal, modern and relatively secular society. The nature of their religious allegiances and the tensions that emerge from their insistence on reproducing traditional cultural practices at the research site will be explored in chapter 5. To sum up: Axmaadeey, Mohamed and Farhan are lived cosmopolitans who are wedded to aspects of Somali cultural practices and discourses that are directly linked to their place of origin, they yearn for life in the homeland and they think Islam provides the moral guidance to deter Somali youth from the temptations of doing drugs and drinking alcohol. In short, they demonstrate what Appiah describes as rooted cosmopolitan behaviour whereby highly mobile subjects continue to be strongly attached to the notion of 'a home of one's own, with its own cultural particularities' (Appiah 1997: 618). Moving from a focus on adult informants, the following section now sketches 7 brief portraits of my key research informants which consist of young SLS born to Somali

parents in the UK or another country outside Somalia, or who left Somalia when they were young children.

Nasra (Female, student, 16 years old)

Nasra is a tall girl who routinely wore bright coloured hijabs over a dark coloured loose body length dress at the school. She frequently used facial cosmetics and on occasion, wore blue or green coloured contact lenses. She projects a shy and soft-spoken demeanour but Nasra was a regular contributor to my classroom discussions. During my fieldwork, Nasra lived in a South London housing estate with her mother, two sisters and her aunts. At that time, her mother was self-employed as a child minder for some Somali families in her local housing estate.

Nasra was born in Dubai²⁰ and she spent the first five years of her life there. Her father was a businessman but in 2003, her parents decided to separate, prompting her mother to return to Somaliland with Nasra and her sisters. In 2004, she arrived in the UK at the age of six. Since then, her family have resided in several areas in London before settling in their current South London location.

As I have noted at the head of this portrait, Nasra regularly marks her religious allegiance to Islam by wearing the hijab by default. She also thinks that religious allegiance to Islam is important for her family and she has been encouraged to observe Muslim practices. However, Nasra concedes that she doesn't perform the entire set of Muslim rituals. As she puts it,

I don't pray all the time but my mum does it and we all fast during Ramadan um I cheat sometimes (laughs) but I fast most of the time (Conversational interview 03/05/14).

Nasra's admission above suggest that she is aware of a set of rituals that Muslims are supposed to observe. However, it is also unremarkable that she finds it difficult as a teenager in London to comply with the entire set of Muslim obligatory practices. In her spare time, Nasra regularly listens to American popular music:

²⁰ Dubai is a transnational hub that attracted many Somali businessmen and workers since the 1990s (Marchal: 94)

we're not supposed to listen to music but I like Tyga²¹ Beyonce²² 'lil Wayne²³ yeah that's what I'm into (Conversational interview 03/05/14).

Nasra's words expressed her awareness that the consumption of Anglo-popular culture is not encouraged by her family. However, as a teenager who is embedded in London, she clearly could not resist the lure of popular American culture.

Nasra has not returned to Somalia since her first visit at the age of 5 but she thinks her constant exposure to her family's verbal interactions during her short visit enhanced her knowledge of Somali language:

I moved from Dubai to Somalia with my two sisters and my mom so that's where I learnt Somali ...I speak Somali here with my family and some Somali friends (Conversational interview 03/05/14).

Although Nasra claims to have learnt Somali language during her short stay in Somalia, it is more likely that her knowledge resulted from her exposure to Somali through her immediate family members throughout her childhood in Dubai and in London. Nasra thinks that being proficient in Somali language is a significant marker of Somali ethnicity for her family. Her mother and aunts tried to maintain the linguistic aspect of their Somali cultural heritage by encouraging Nasra and her sisters to speak Somali at home. However, she claims to have a low level of expertise in an unspecified Somali dialect:

I can speak casual Somali with my aunties they say my Somali is bad they try to force us to speak it at home (Conversational interview 03/05/14).

Nasra's account of the linguistic practices at her home space reflects the preceding adult SLS' accounts and further reinforces some of the findings in the research literature (Sporton and Valentine 2007). However, her family's efforts to transmit their linguistic heritage appear to have limited success. The second language in Nasra's linguistic repertoire is Arabic:

I know and understand a wee bit of Arabic I hardly spoke any Somali in Dubai because I used to watch a lot of Arabic cartoons and that's how I learnt the language (Conversational interview 03/05/14).

²¹ Micheal Ray Stevenson, known by his stage name Tyga, is an American rapper.

²² Female American singer, songwriter and actress

²³ Male American hip hop recording artist and author from New Orleans.

Nasra's account of her language practices in her childhood in Dubai is a bit puzzling. It is unclear what language(s) were used by her family, but she communicated an alignment with Arabic language. Although she has only spent the first five years in Dubai, her self-reported minimal competence in a version of Arabic communicated an alignment with the dominant language of her place of birth. The third language in Nasra's linguistic repertoire is English. Her first contact with English in a formal learning context began in a primary school in London at the age of six. Upon completion of her primary education, she continued her secondary schooling at a South London school. Among her peers, she uses 'normal English'. She differentiates the type of English that is used with her peers with the register that she communicates with her teachers:

Nasra: we're supposed to use posh English

Steve: what's posh English?

Nasra: Erm like saying stuff properly using like posh words and stuff using grammar properly and just like talking like in a formal way

(Conversational interview 03/05/14).

In her account, Nasra's description of 'posh English' probably refers to the Standard English that her school imposes on the students. In sum, Nasra's linguistic repertoire includes Somali, Standard Arabic, non-Standard English, Standard English. Among her friends of Somali descent, she occasionally engages in what she calls 'mixed language' practices:

Nasra: I speak some Somali with friends but it's mixed.

Steve: what do you mean by mixed

Nasra: like if I see my Somali friends yeah I'll say Waryaa²⁴, 'sup?

Steve: what does wa -ry -aa mean?

Nasra: (laughs) it means 'oi' we can say it to people our age but not to elders

(Conversational interview 03/05/14).

Nasra's description of her 'mixed' Somali language use suggests that some of the utterances that she uses with her Somali friends has been hybridised. The interjection

²⁴ The significance of this Somali interjection will be discussed in chapter 6.

‘waryaa’ indexes Nasra and her friends’ shared Somali ethnicity. However, the inclusion of the colloquial term ‘sup’²⁵, a contraction of the African American greeting ‘wassup’- also projects a cultural identity that is contoured by her exposure to the contemporary language practices among her friends in London. Her hybridised utterance adds to what Hewitt (1986) describes as ‘Multi-Racial Local Vernacular’ (Hewitt 1986: 151). This variety is characterized by a ‘hybrid combination of linguistic forms’ that encompasses ‘social and individual variation’ (Hewitt 1986: *ibid*). Nasra’s utterance also indicated her belonging to cultures of hybridity (Hall 1992), one that references her Somali identity and another that indexes her status as a London teenager who practices contemporary language use with her peers. Second, she was also aware that ‘waryaa’ is a term that socially structured, it is not a respectful greeting term to be used on community elders. The significance of ‘waryaa’ as a marker of Somali ethnicity is discussed in chapter 6.

Country	Length of stay	Age at departure	Lived experiences	Languages learned/used
Dubai	5	5	Childhood	Somali, Arabic
Somalia	A few months	6	Childhood	Somali
UK	10 years	NA	Primary and secondary school	Non-Standard English, Standard English, Somali

Table 6: Nasra’s biographical trajectory

As recapitulated by the table above, she was born in Dubai where she spent the first five years of her life. She subsequently lived in Somalia for several months before her arrival in London. Her self-reported minimal competence in Arabic and Somali was attributed to her immersion in the linguistic ecology in Dubai and Somalia. Although Nasra’s family wants her to improve her proficiency in Somali, she finds it difficult. Nasra is a teenager who has been embedded in London for over 10 years. She has been educated in London and Non-Standard English dominates her daily interactions with her peers. As the preceding paragraphs suggest, Nasra’s mother and her aunts have tried to encourage her to observe a strict set of Islamic practices and she partly complies with their wishes by wearing the hijab and by performing some religious obligations. However, the accounts

²⁵ A greeting form popular among teenagers (Thorne 2007)

of her lived experiences as an embedded resident of London appear to have shaped her ambivalent notion of Somali ethnicity.

Safiyo (Female, 16 years old, student)

Safiyo is a chubby girl who wore black hijabs over long loose black garments at the research site. The hijabs that she favours were elaborately embroidered with gold or silver threads and were typically adorned with trinkets or chains in various designs and colours. At the research site, Safiyo was always heavily made up and wore black mascara in a fashion popularized by Amy Winehouse²⁶. Safiyo ‘was born in England, London’ (Conversational interview 03/05/2014) and she lives with her parents and four younger siblings in South London. Her father came to London from Somaliland in the 1980s as a teenager and attended a secondary school before continuing his education in an unspecified ‘posh London uni’ (Conversational interview 03/05/2014). At the time of my fieldwork, her father was a practicing General Practitioner in a South London surgery. Her mother stays at home to care for Safiyo and her four younger siblings.

Like Axmaadeey, Mohamed and Farhan, Safiyo’s father maintains his connections with the homeland by making annual trips to Somaliland. In his efforts to connect his family with life in the homeland, Safiyo and her siblings have spent a summer holiday in Somaliland when she was 10 years old. During her holiday, she was acquainted with her relatives, but she did not enjoy a particular aspect of traditional life:

they drink camel’s milk and like once yeah they cooked sheep’s stomach yuck (makes a face)

(Conversational interview 03/05/14)

Safiyo’s words express her identity as a British born teenager, the consumption of camel’s milk²⁷ and traditional food were exoticised. Like Harris’s (2006) south Asian informants’

²⁶ A UK popular music artist who died from in 2011

²⁷ According to Laitlin (1977), camel’s milk is a staple diet among people that practice the nomadic way of life in Somaliland and ‘[f]or a Somali nomad, to drink camel’s milk is to be truly happy’ (Laitlin 1977: 21).

experiences of travelling back to their parents' homelands, Safiyo's account comes across as a view belonging to the archetypal myopic British tourist abroad.

As I indicated earlier, Safiyo's religious allegiance to Islam is communicated by her typical attire at the research site. She is also aware that Muslims are expected to fulfil a set of obligations:

Safiyo: we can't do haram things like eat pork and all that

Steve: what's all that?

Safiyo: you know praying and fasting stuff like that I don't know the rules my parents tell me about it you must wear the hijab don't swear (Conversational interview 03/05/14)

In the above, Safiyo expresses a sense of apprehension about her understanding of the set of rituals that Muslims are supposed to observe. Her knowledge of Islam is limited to some of the obligations that her parents told her to fulfil. Like Nasra, she partly fulfils her parents' wishes by wearing the hijab, but she demonstrates an ambiguous understanding of Islamic practices.

Safiyo's parents think their Somaliland dialect is important and have tried to preserve it by encouraging her and her siblings to use it at home. However, she does not rate her competence in the language highly:

I don't really speak Somali they say my Somali is rubbish my aunts nag at my mom all the time I don't even care. I know its shit (shrugs her shoulders) I really only know bad words in Somali (laughs) I haven't got that Somali accent (Conversational interview 03/05/14).

In the above, Safiyo expresses her nonchalance about her knowledge of Somali. Unlike the adults in the preceding portraits, knowledge of Somali language is not a predominant concern for her. She thinks that English is her first language due to her place of birth:

I was born here this is why I am fluent in English so English is my first language (Conversational interview 03/05/14)

Safiyo's view that English is her 'first language' communicated her identity of someone who has been formally educated in the UK education since her attendance at a nursery

from the age of three and during my fieldwork, was preparing to sit for her GCSEs. She also claims that English is the dominant language that is used at home:

we talk in English we speak Somali sometimes to our parents but it's mostly in English (Conversational interview 03/05/14).

Safiyo's account of the language shift in her home is unsurprising. She and her siblings were born and raised in the UK and her father is a fluent speaker of English who has lived in the UK since he was a teenager. Further, Safiyo's claimed friendship network consists of teenagers of multiple ethnic backgrounds that reflect the demographics of the locality²⁸. In her everyday interactions with her peers, Safiyo communicates in what she describes as 'street talk' (Conversational interview 03/05/14). Safiyo's description of 'street talk' probably referred to the ways the global youth perceive Non-Standard forms in their local contexts as cool, tough, youthful, dangerous and anti-establishment. Reyes' (2003) informants consisting of Asian American teenagers view slang as African-American, attaching this code to a general 'Ghettoness' (2003: 517). She attributes her proficiency in the 'street' variety of English to her constant interactions with her peers as 'we talk like this in school' (Conversational interview 03/05/14). However, even though she frequently deployed the local vernacular at school, she faced problems with the rejection of her membership in the 'black' ethnic category by her peers of Jamaican and Nigerian descent:

every time I have an opinion on like black stuff like hairweave they say be quiet you're artificial black (sucks her teeth) (Conversational interview 03/05/14)

Intriguingly though, her typical communicative habit of the Jamaican creole and West African practice of tooth kissing (Hewitt 1986) to voice her displeasure also firmly index her as a resident of inner London. However, Safiyo's words above demonstrate how Somalis have been positioned outside a notion of blackness by her peers. The constraining effects of local South London discourses of ethnicities on young SLS will be investigated in chapter 7.

In short, Safiyo was born in London, she has visited her father's place of origin and she professes to have minimal knowledge of Somali language. Although she is visibly marked

²⁸ To be highlighted in chapter 5

as a person with religious attachment to Islam, Safiyo does not exhibit a deep understanding or strong commitment to its principles. Unsurprisingly, she thinks English is her first language due to her upbringing and education in the UK. Her knowledge of English encompasses both the Standard that were taught by her teachers in school and the ‘street’ variety that she had been socialized into by her multi-ethnic peers.

Shamso (Female, student, 16 years old)

Shamso is a petite and soft-spoken girl. Like Nasra and Safiyo, she routinely wore hijabs at my research site. Her typical attire consists of brightly coloured hijabs over loose ankle length garments and leather boots. However, unlike Nasra and Safiyo, Shamso does not wear any makeup. Shamso was born in Saudi Arabia and this is where she lived for four years. There, she was raised by her mother because her parents separated when she was a few months old. At the age of four, she moved to Somaliland because her mother had to care for her grandmother. In 2004, she was six years old when a tragic road accident resulted in the deaths of her mother and grandmother. Her aunt, who works as a primary schoolteacher in London then arranged for Shamso to be taken under her care. Her aunt’s efforts to provide for Shamso reflects the reported collective nature of Somali families in which responsibility for the children extends beyond their biological parents (Harris 2004). Since 2005, Shamso has lived with her aunt and her two cousins in several London localities before settling in South London.

Shamso has only lived in Somalia for 2 years during her childhood but she appears to have vivid memories of her experiences:

I enjoyed living in Somalia because children had the freedom to do what they want they don’t have to be cooped inside like you do in the UK children used their imagination they didn’t depend on toys and video games (Conversational interview 03/05/14)

Like the adult SLS, Shamso expresses a romantic idealisation of life in the homeland. She implied that life in Somalia is safe, children’s imaginations are freed from the constraining effects of modern sources of amusement such as toys and video games. However, her words above partly contradict her routine behaviour at the site. Typical of most of the teenagers at the site, she frequently uses her smartphone to connect with social media.

Unlike Nasra and Safiyo, Shamso self-reports a strong allegiance to Islam. In addition to her hijab as a visible marker of her religious affiliation with Islam, she performs the prayer rituals at the site and she claims to strictly observe the ritual of fasting during Ramadhan.

Somali is the first language in Shamso's life, but she attributed her expertise to her interactions with her grandmother for two years:

I love my grandmother she was the one who taught me my mother tongue (Conversational interview 03/05/14).

Perhaps it was due to her immersion in the language during her stay in Somaliland but Shamso's description of Somali as her mother tongue suggests her alignment with the dialect of her grandmother's place of origin. However, she feels that her knowledge of Somali has been eroded since her arrival in London:

my Somali is ok but I feel that I'm starting to forget my mother tongue slowly I have a few friends from Somalia but even with those I speak English. (Conversational interview 03/05/14)

Shamso's unsurprising assessment of her proficiency in Somali partly parallels Nasra and Safiyo's accounts. The erosion of her skills in the mother tongue is attributed to the minimal opportunities for her to deploy the language. The second language in Shamso's linguistic repertoire is Standard Arabic, a language she was formally taught during her attendance at a nursery in Saudi Arabia. In Somaliland, she was also exposed to Classical Arabic by attending a *dugsi*²⁹ in which she was taught to read the Quran. English was added to Shamso's linguistic repertoire upon her arrival in London. Unsurprisingly, she encountered difficulties with learning a new language:

I started primary school in the summer of 2005 when I was seven started in year three I found it hard to cope in primary school because I was in a new country which is so different to the one I left the language was very hard to learn first hand (Conversational interview 03/05/14)

Further, as a non-English speaker enrolled in Year 3 in a local South London primary school, Shamso encountered initial difficulties with making connections with her peers:

it was hard I found it hard to fit in at school children in my class used to bully me because I did not speak or understand what they were saying and there was no one I could tell because no teacher spoke my language but this is what motivated me in to learning the

²⁹ Dugsis are 'traditional Quranic school (*dugsi*) and its teachers (*macallim*) were highly valued and respected within the society' (Cassanelli and Asadkadir 2008 :108)

language fast I believe so I started going to extra tuition and requested extra help in school (Puffs up her chest) in a space of two years I learnt to speak and write in English which was surprising to my teachers and my family (Conversational interview 03/05/14)

Shamso's account above challenges the reported causal link between Somali children's problem with learning English to their reported underachievement in the UK education system (Demie et al 2007). Although she went through an initial period of hardship in her efforts to learn English, Shamso overcame her challenges by enrolling in extra tuition classes and actively sought extra support from her teachers. At her school, Shamso claims to have a network of ethnically diverse peers. Among this social network, English dominates their language use, but she consciously avoids using 'slang English' with them:

Steve: what do you mean by slang English

Shamso: sir, you know words like innit sick you know all the street stuff

Steve: why don't you like slang words

Shamso: they're not proper yeah and my English teacher said if you keep using them you'll never get a good job I believe him.

(Conversational interview 03/05/14)

Shamso's view departs from Nasra and Safiyo's self-accounts of their English language use, and she aligns with her teacher's view that 'street' English should be avoided in order to broaden her future employment prospects.

Country	Length of stay	Age at departure	Lived experiences	Language(s) learned/used
Saudi Arabia	4 years	4 years old	Childhood, attended a nursery for 2 years	Somali, Arabic
Somalia	2 years	6 years old	Attended a dugsi	Somali, Classical Arabic
UK	10 years -	N/A	Primary and secondary schooling	English, Somali, Classical Arabic

Table 7: Shamso's biographical trajectory

To sum up, Shamso was born in Saudi Arabia, travelled to Somaliland where she had lived for 2 years prior to her arrival in London. She projects a Muslim identity by the clothes she wore and Shamso's self-account of her religious practices communicated her commitment to observing the Somali traditional cultural practice of religious allegiance to Islam. Her linguistic repertoire consisting of Somali, Classical Arabic and English is accumulated by her immersion in the language practices at her home in Saudi Arabia, Somalia and London.

Abuubakar (Male, student/teacher's assistant, 17 years old)

Abuubakar is Axmaadeey's son and he was born and raised in a Southeast London locality. Like his father, Abuubakar is tall but he is clean shaven and keeps his hair closely cropped. His attire consisting of mainly baggy jeans and trainers reflects the type of apparel that teenage boys typically wore in London during my fieldwork. In addition to his role as a student who was preparing to take his GCSEs at the research site during my fieldwork, Abuubakar is also an influential member among his peers at my site in his role as the teacher's assistant for the Year 2 students on Saturday mornings.

Apart from a year-long holiday in Somaliland, Abuubakar is deeply embedded in London. He was taken out of his Year 10 schooling because of his father's desire to reconnect Abuubakar with the family in his place of origin. In Somaliland, he was given private tuition in Science by a teacher who visited his family home. Like Shamso, Abuubakar enjoyed some aspects of life in the homeland such as the relative safety it provides. Like Safiyo, he also experienced traditional home cooked food:

The food that they used to make was nice, but food is a problem, there was not processed food You miss the chicken and chips. You miss your sweets and your chocolates and your milkshakes and the things that I used to eat. Processed food. Even though it's not good but I have it every once in a while [Conversational interview 30/05/14]

Abuubakar's words express his lived experiences as resident in a modern society in which the consumption of processed food is commonplace. Life in Somaliland was made distinct, it did not offer the instant gratifications that life in contemporary London provides.

Like his father, Islam figures prominently in Abuubakar's life. He claims to pray five times a day and he congregates with other Muslims to worship at his local mosque 'at

least once a day' [Conversational interview 30/05/14]. Abuubakar also observes the ritual of fasting at designated times of the day during the holy month of Ramadan. Additionally, like Nasra, Abuubakar is aware that the consumption of popular music is frowned upon by the particular strand of Islam which he subscribes to:

Abuubakar: I'm not a fan of music

Steve: why not?

Abuubakar: it's not religiously encouraged so I prefer not to listen to it.

Steve: so it's because of the religious teachings basically?

Abuubakar: yes, it's not encouraged to listen to music so I prefer not to listen to any music [Conversational interview 30/05/14]

Abuubakar's resistance to the consumption of popular culture expresses a world view that is contoured by his strong religious allegiance to an unspecified strand of teaching in Islam. He also tries to impose his religious beliefs on other young SLS and the tensions that emerge from his attempts will be explored in the following chapter.

Somali was the first language he learned at home because his father ensured that the language aspect of their Somali cultural heritage is preserved by regulating the linguistic behaviour in the home space:

We speak Somali at home my dad stops us if we use English you know my dad (laughs) we speak Somali with my cousins [Conversational interview 30/05/14]

Abuubakar's description of the language use in his home space confirms Axmaadeey's account. Further, like Axmaadeey, Mohamed and Farhan, Abuubakar's description of the Somali language that he uses signalled his alignment with a specific dialect that is practiced by his family in Somaliland:

Old Somali's like, like it's nomad Somali, you know, they don't speak other languages, it's like like old school Somali [Conversational interview 30/05/14]

Abuubakar words above implies that the version that his family uses is authentic and unadulterated. 'Nomad Somali' is emblematic of the dialect that is associated with his

father's place of birth. Like the adults, his notion of Somali language is linked to his father's place of birth. However, he does not view Somali as his first language:

Because of my upbringing, English it's my first, it's my first, this is my first language, I think the most fluent is English. Then after that it's Somali [Conversational interview 30/05/14]

Abuubakar's assessment of his expertise in the languages in his linguistic repertoire is unremarkable, he is a young person born and schooled in London. Although Somali is regularly spoken at home, he has been formally educated in the UK education system in which English is the medium of instruction. In addition to Somali and English, Abuubakar claims to have a good knowledge of Arabic. He attributed his knowledge to his daily interactions with his parents and in formal learning environments:

Yeah. So it's around me, so.... I didn't put effort I picked it up at such an early age that I don't really know why.. And also I used to go to madrassahs where I used to learn Arabic [Conversational interview 30/05/14]

It is uncertain which variety of Arabic that Abuubakar was referring to in the above. However, his experiences in formal learning environments such as the madrassah³⁰ that he attended suggested that he was referring to Classical Arabic.

Country	Length of stay	Age at departure	Lived experiences	Languages learned/used
UK	13 years	13	Childhood, nursery, primary and secondary school.	English, Somali, Arabic
Somaliland	1 year	14	Given private tuition in Science and Arabic	Somali, Arabic
UK	3 years -	N/A	Secondary school, worked as teacher's assistant	English, Somali, Arabic

Table 8: Abuubakar's biographical trajectory

³⁰ In the UK context, Madrassas viewed as supplementary schools that are run for Muslim children that operate outside the mainstream education system (Cherti and Bradley 2011: 3)

To sum up, Abuubakar communicated his allegiance to Islam in his self-accounts of the ways in which he fulfils his obligations as a Muslim. He was born and raised in London, but he aligns with a view of Somali language that is specifically related to his father's dialect. His linguistic repertoire consisting of 'Nomad Somali', English and Arabic resulted from his immersion in the language practices in the home space, his formal education and engagement with his peers in London and his attendance at madrassahs. Like Safiyo however, he also communicated his identity as a person born in the UK. English is his considered to be his 'first language' and homeland experiences is viewed from the lens of a person who was raised in a modern society.

Asad (Male, student, 16 years old)

Asad is a short and lean teenager who likes to wear designer clothes and branded boots. Like Abuubakar, he keeps his hair closely cropped. Asad was born and raised in London and during my fieldwork, he lived with his parents and three younger siblings in Bermondsey. His father is a businessman who typically wore smart shirts and trousers at the research site. His mother stays at home to take care of his family.

Like my other young informants, Asad has been encouraged to reconnect with his 'roots' during his holiday in Somalia when he was 11 years old and he has also reproduced the discourse about the safety that life in tradition provides. However, unlike the adult SLS, Asad's connections with his family is not significant for him:

no even the ones in this country I just see them once in a blue moon I don't talk to them much my grandmother complains to my dad all the time

[Conversational interview 30/05/14]

Asad's words express his indifference towards the importance of preserving connections with his family. He does not align with the idea that Somali ethnicity is constituted by close family connections. Asad also claims to have minimal knowledge of Somali language. Although he was encouraged to speak in Somali at home, Asad and his siblings were not expert users of the language:

Asad: That mumbo jumbo Somali we can't do it much

Steve: so how do you talk to your dad

Asad: he understands English now he'll tell us something in Somali and we reply in English

[Conversational interview 30/05/14]

Asad's assessment of his knowledge of Somali is unremarkable for a South London teenager. However, the description of his expertise in Somali language communicated his weak allegiance to the linguistic aspect of Somali ethnicity. It would also appear that even though Asad's father has tried to impose Somali language at the home space, the children resist by responding in English. Although he does not demonstrate a deep affiliation to Somali language, Asad's words above also highlighted his ability to understand Somali language due to his father's language use at home. Like the adult SLS in this chapter, Asad's father thinks their religious allegiance to Islam is significant. To instil Muslim practices on his children, he paid for Asad and his siblings to attend an Islamic supplementary school:

Asad: yeah I went to a madrassah for a year, learned some Arabic but I forgot most of it now. I don't use it my parents, yeah they pray and fast and all that

Steve: Do you do all that?

Asad: yeah some of it but I'm not too religious I cheat sometimes

Steve: How?

Asad: (laughs) I'm supposed to fast but I gotta have my Coke

[Conversational interview 30/05/14]

In the above, Asad expressed a world view that is not restricted by Islamic principles. As a young person who was raised in London, his father's encouragements and his experiences of attending a madrassah did not cultivate his allegiance to Islam. Unlike Shamsi and Abuubakar, he does not comply with the obligations that Muslims are supposed to fulfil. The tensions that emerge when his laissez faire attitude towards religion are challenged by young SLS with stronger allegiances to Islam will be explored in chapter 5.

In short, like Abuubakar, Asad looks like a typical young Londoner and like Safiyo, he describes his typical language use as 'slang' and he provide an example of its features below:

Asad: the way I'm speaking now like fam is like family but you can refer to it as the person that you're friends with that you're close with

Steve: okay where do you use slang?

Asad: my friends they're mostly Black or Chinese or Oriental Asian

Steve: okay so who uses this word?

Asad: everybody uses it like certain personalities

[Conversational interview 30/05/14]

In the above, Asad communicated the salience of his London identity. His use of the London Jamaican Creole inflected 'fam' in place of the standard English form 'family' prominently indexes his identity as a resident of London (Kerswill 2014: 438). His self-described 'slang' language use is shaped by the multi-ethnic peers who reflect the demographics of South London. Asad's small, inconsequential acts of linguistic practices that deviate from Standard English with his peers signalled his 'engagement in youth culture' (Reyes, 2005: 512). It demonstrates his alignment with the language use that is symbolic of his peer group in London.

In short, Asad's self-accounts of his everyday language use and cultural practices communicated his prominent identity as a London teenager. The ways that Somali ethnicity were evoked by him suggests his weak attachment to traditional cultural practices that are affixed on Somalis in the UK by the research literature. This is apparent in Asad's self-account of his loose connections with his relatives in his father's homeland, his low-level proficiency in Somali and his vague understandings of the principles of Islam. He presents himself as a subject who is not bound by traditional indicators of Somali ethnicity such as connections to the homeland, language or religious allegiance to Islam.

Naciimo (Female, student, 15 years old)

Naciimo is a petite girl and like the other SLS girls, wore the hijab by default at the research site but like Shamso, she also eschews makeup. She is a quiet but assertive young person who wasn't afraid to put her views across during our classroom discussions at the site. Naciimo was born in the Netherlands and this is where she lived for the first five years of her life. She wasn't sure, but she thinks her parents, grandmother and aunts migrated to Holland from Somaliland a few years before she was born. In 2003, Naciimo moved to London with her parents and her younger sibling. She thinks her father's decision to move to London was motivated by his desire to secure better employment. It

is unclear where her father was educated but during my fieldwork, he was a Chartered Accountant who practices in an unspecified location in London. Her father's profession identifies him as a member of the Somali elites in the Netherlands. In the Netherlands, this group of Somalis were reported to be 'highly educated and relatively well-off people' that can 'move onward when they feel they can be more productive somewhere else' (Van Liempt 2010: 4). In addition to caring for Naciimo and her brother, her mother runs a small jewellery retail business from their family home.

Somali was the first language that Naciimo learned during her childhood in Holland:

we spoke only Somali at home, there were thirteen of us my grandmother my aunts and their children

(Conversational interview 03/05/14)

Naciimo's account suggests that her knowledge of Somali language was cultivated by common socialization processes resulting from repeated interactions in her home environment in the Netherlands. Like most of the young SLS, Naciimo identifies with Somali language. However, she also concedes that she is not able to engage in prolonged conversations that are conducted exclusively in Somali language:

I can't speak Somali without mixing some English my aunts always tease me and ask what's that but they understand me so it's okay (Conversational interview 03/05/14)

Naciimo's inability to conduct long stretches of talk in Somali language is unsurprising, her daily communicative network consisting of 13 family members at her home in the Netherlands during her childhood has been reduced to her immediate family members in London. Further, her exposure to Somali in the home space has been further limited by the emergence of English language use. In London, she tells me that her parents tried to encourage them to speak their heritage language, but she thinks that her family's interactions are slowly shifting towards English. However, Naciimo's account also challenges the reported inter-generational conflicts caused by Somali parents' inability to communicate with their children (Harding et al 2007). Her father is highly educated and fluent in English, Naciimo's family does not appear to face disabling inter-generational conflicts due to her lack of expertise in Somali language.

In addition to Somali, Classical Arabic was introduced to her linguistic repertoire by her grandmother who taught her how to memorise the Quran. During her childhood in Holland, Naciimo was also exposed to Dutch in a formal learning environment from her attendance in a nursery for two years. She claims to have minimal expertise in Dutch because having relocated to London, her exposure to the language is limited to watching television when she visits her family in Holland. When she arrived in London at the age of five, she was exposed to English in a formal learning environment at her primary school.

Naciimo is committed to her religious allegiance to Islam and for her, Muslims are expected to fulfil a set of obligations:

yeah I can memorise the Quran I pray I fast so I'm a good Muslim (Conversational interview 03/05/14)

Naciimo's account of her practices implies that she aligns with the Islamic aspect of Somali ethnicity. Like Shamso and Abuubakar, her everyday practices in London include performing rituals that are expected of practicing Muslims. Unlike the other SLS in this chapter, Naciimo has never visited Somalia but she maintains regular contact with her grandmother and aunts who were permanently settled in the Netherlands.

Country	Length of stay	Age at departure	Lived experiences	Language(s) learned/used
Holland	5 years	5	Childhood, attended a nursery.	Somali, Arabic and Dutch
UK	10 years	NA	Primary and secondary school	English, Somali and Classical Arabic

Table 9: Naciimo's biographical trajectory

In short, Naciimo was born in the Netherlands, have lived in London since she was five and she maintains close connection with her family in the Netherlands. She claims to be a committed Muslim and she fulfil her religious commitments faithfully. Her linguistic repertoire consisting of Somali, Classical Arabic, Dutch and English is shaped by her interactions with her family as a child, focused instruction by her grandmother, her nursery carers in the Netherlands and her immersion in the UK context as a student and resident of South London.

Daud (Male, student, 15 years old)

Daud is a short and chubby boy who made intermittent appearances at the research site. Like most London teenage boys during my period of fieldwork, his typical apparel consists of jeans, hoodies and branded trainers. Daud was born and raised in various areas in South London and during my fieldwork, he lived with his mother and his younger brother in Bermondsey. His father originated from Somaliland and his mother was born in Qatar. He thinks his parents were married in Qatar, but they separated when he was about five years old. During my fieldwork, his mother was employed in the UK public sector as a social worker in an undisclosed location in London. Daud remained in close contact with his father, a businessman who operated a 'small internet cafe' (Conversational interview 30/05/14) in London.

Like the adult SLS who were described in this chapter, Daud's father is strongly connected with his place of origin. He said his father makes annual visits to the homeland and in 2012, he paid for Daud and his brother's six-week holiday in Somaliland. Daud was 13 years old then and like the other young SLS who have visited Somaliland, expresses his surprise at the relative freedom that children were given to play. However, Daud doesn't maintain close contact with his extended family members in Somaliland but he is closely connected with his cousins in London who 'live like close to me' (Conversational interview 30/05/14). Like the adult SLS, his father is a committed Muslim and he tried to encourage Daud to observe Islamic practices. However, Daud thinks that he is not very religious because 'I don't do all of it' (Conversational interview 30/05/14). Like Asad, Daud demonstrates an awareness of the practices that are expected of followers of Islam, but he does not strictly observe them.

Daud's father share similar views with Axmaadeey, Mohamed and Farhan regarding the importance of maintaining Somali language among his children. He speaks to his children exclusively in Somali but his efforts appear to have only partly paid off:

Steve: how many languages do you speak?

Daud: one and a half.

Steve: one and a half.

Daud: yeah I know just a bit of Somali I'm not fluent

[Conversational interview 30/05/14]

Daud's self-reported low fluency in Somali is unremarkable, it parallels Safiyo's and Asad's accounts. Further, Daud claims that Somali language is not the predominant language in his home space after his parents separated. His mother speaks English fluently and he also thinks she is not very fluent in Somali. Daud says his mother frequently codeswitches between Somali, Standard Arabic and English in her verbal communications with her family members in Somalia and the diaspora. Daud's self-evaluation about his expertise in the components of his linguistic repertoire also implied that English is the language that he is most adept in. Of course, this is unsurprising for a teenager who was born and raised in South London, English is viewed as the 'one' or 'complete' language in his repertoire. English has been the dominant language in his life ever since his formal education started with his attendance at a South London nursery.

At his secondary school in South London, Daud's claimed friendship network consists of 'mostly Caribbeans[sic] and Orientals'. Daud describes the typical language used among his friends as non-Standard English:

Daud: just normal English, sometimes a bit of broken up English and slang would be used

Steve: okay so can you give me some examples of broken up English?

Daud: just like innit like is it and stuff like that just broken up like not proper formal English that you use in interview just more relaxed because you're with people that you're the same age and talk the same as you

[Conversational interview 30/05/14]

Daud's description of his 'normal English' practices align with the other young SLS in this chapter. However, Daud's comments are also indicative of a desire to conform to social and linguistic norms that are practiced by his peers in informal communicative contexts. Intriguingly, Daud equates word contraction with Non-Standard English, yet the example he provides of Standard – "isn't it" - is itself a contraction!

As indicated in Daud's biography, his lived experiences are tightly connected with South London. Like most of the other young SLS, he has visited his father's homeland but he

does not maintain connections with his relatives in Somaliland. Instead, he communicates his ties with his relatives who live around his locality and self-identifies with the local language practices of his peers.

Comments on portraits of young SLS:

The portraits of young SLS have shown that as a group, they do not all originate from the same place, did not share similar views on the nature of their religious allegiance to Islam, did not exhibit enduring attachments to Somaliland and as a group, did not show a depth of expertise in Somali language. Safiyo, Abuubakar, Asad and Daud were born and raised in London but Nasra, Shamso and Naciimo's trajectories to London involved crossing national borders. However, there are some generalizable traits among this group of informants. The girls mark their shared religious affiliation to Islam by wearing the hijab but the boys were given the freedom to choose their typical attire. Among the girls, Nasra and Safiyo were routinely heavily made up while Naciimo and Shamso eschew cosmetics. As a group, their self-reported allegiances to Islam range from a deep attachment as demonstrated by Abuubakar, Shamso and Naciimo's observance of a set of rituals to Nasra and Safiyo's awareness of some of its practices to a *laissez faire* attitude that was communicated by Asad and Daud. The tensions that arise from the nature of their allegiances will be picked up in chapter 5. Although they identify with Somali language as a group, apart from Abuubakar, they do not claim to be expert speakers. Like the adults, Abuubakar also reproduces the discourse of authentic 'Nomad Somali' to signal his alignment with his father's dialect. The communicative habits that index Somali ethnicity at my site will be explored in chapter 6. In short, apart from Abuubakar, this group of young SLS have residual notions of what Somali ethnicity might mean but they are conscious of a set of linguistic and traditional cultural practices which they feel compelled to observe. However, as a group, they communicated their status as teenagers in London in their descriptions of the everyday language practices among their peers. However, they are also constrained by South London local discourses of ethnicity, a topic to be explored in chapter 6.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to provide the reader with my informants' evocations of Somali ethnicity in their references to their place of origin, connections with their family, language and traditional cultural practices. In doing so, I have shown that previously unanalysed details in the research literature suggests (i) adult SLS are cosmopolitans who attempt to reproduce certain aspects of Somali traditional cultural practices in modernity (ii) most young SLS self-identify with the notion of Somali ethnicity but do not exhibit a deep knowledge of Somali language and position themselves in various ways with respect to their religious allegiance to Islam. This chapter has also shown that in superdiversity, the nature of Somali ethnicities must be understood in relation to individual biographical trajectories. It has shown that as a group, my informants' do not share similar places of origin and migration history prior to their arrival in the UK. The preceding portraits have also shown how my key informants' linguistic and cultural practices might have been shaped by their lived experiences of their travel itineraries. As a group, my informants are well-educated, they are not hampered by difficulties that are reported to beset Somalis in the UK. My adult informants were either gainfully employed or owners of small businesses. They do not appear to encounter problems with English language acquisition and their accounts suggest that they are not overly reliant on state welfare benefits. To an extent, this chapter provides the parameters that drive my study: (i) SLS encounter moments of tension when aspects of traditional cultural practices are imposed in modernity, (ii) rooted communicative habits as indexical markers of Somali ethnicity and finally, (iii) the importance of the influence of their locality on their ethnic positionings. The next chapter reveals some of the low-level tensions that emerge during the coming together of the discourses and 'traditional' Somali cultural practices in a modern, urban context.

Chapter 5: Somali ‘traditions’ in modernity

Introduction

This chapter investigates how a set of narratives on certain aspects of Somali ethnicities seemed to connect people who self-identify as Somalis at my research site. Before turning to my analysis of the data, I will first explain the title of this chapter. During my encounters with SLS, I noticed that a significant practice among my informants was the telling of moral stories and the use of a variety of narratives and discourses to try to suggest that there was some kind of ‘traditional’ or ‘authentic’ Somali ethnicity which (i) was regrettably being lost, (ii) was being challenged and (iii) is a point of contrast with London life that made my informants distinctively different from people of other ethnicities. Therefore, I decided in this chapter to give a sense of how a claimed Somali ‘tradition’ operates with intention in contemporary London. My informants’ narratives about certain ways of life and practices seemed to suggest that it is a part of ‘traditional’ Somali ethnicity. By referring to ‘traditions’ or ‘traditional’, I am not suggesting that these narratives are ‘actual’ Somali ethnicity or a fixed Somali way of life but a construct that I developed for the purposes of this part of the thesis. For the sake of brevity, I decided to put the label ‘tradition’, ‘traditions’ or ‘traditional’ on my informants telling of a set of moral stories. My interpretation is that they resort to these tropes as a way of managing some of the tensions brought about in modernity as reflected in a Western, liberal and relatively secular country. In my portrayal of the UK as a modern and relatively secular state, it is by way of contrast with other contexts. For example, my country of origin, Malaysia is a nation state which declares Islam as its official religion. In this context, the observance of certain Islamic rituals and teachings are enforced on members of the Muslim community. In this scenario, during Ramadhan, officials from the Syariah court would police restaurants and foodstalls to ensure that Muslims do not openly deviate from the ritual of fasting until the call of **IFTAR** (the evening meal with which Muslims end their daily Ramadhan fast at sunset). While London or the UK is not devoid of religious signs and symbols, the dominant discourse is modern and secular. For example, the 2017 British Social Attitudes Survey reported that over half of the respondents in the UK did not report allegiance to any religion (available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/04/half-uk-population-has-no-religion-british-social-attitudes-survey>).

As I will show in the upcoming sections of this chapter, my key informants also constantly referred to a set of narratives about ways of life that are not typically found in modern societies. Although my informants are mostly well travelled cosmopolitans who originated from urban contexts in Somaliland, their narratives and moral stories appear to yearn for contexts in which people mostly lived in villages and rural areas and were typically organised along kinship and clan or tribal connections. Some of my adult informants also projected the idea of a collective agreement on what is appropriate or inappropriate behaviour with regard to a set of moral stories about the importance of respect to elders, practices of clan, Islam and gender relations. However, in contemporary London, some of my informants encounter tensions when their absolute notions of what is ‘right or wrong’ were challenged. In modern contexts, mass democracy has been established because of the struggle for equality. In this context, group rights are enshrined in law. For example, in contrast to traditional patriarchal societies, girls were obliged to attend schools by law in the UK. Instead of tribal allegiances, people are citizens of nation states and an individual’s status is typically delineated by class affiliations. Modern societies are also governed by nation state authority. Further, folk customs have been mostly replaced by reason and science. Knowledge is reproduced in standard languages through print literacy. As Harris and Rampton (2003) observe, life in modern contexts feature

an orientation towards citizenship and nation states, to reason rather than custom, to literacy rather than oracy, argument above narrative, and education over traditional socialisation’ (Harris and Rampton 2003: 3)

Hence, what this chapter attempts to show is some of the tensions that arise when narratives of alleged authentic Somali ethnicity in contemporary South London were challenged or not complied with. In a sense, this chapter also shows the limits of practicing Somali ‘traditions’ in a modern context. The following sections reveal some the ways in which these efforts induce strains, tensions and occasionally resistance for in general, while aspects of ‘traditional’ Somali ethnicity have been espoused by some mainly adult informants, there is a noticeable shift in orientation towards identifying with aspects of life in contemporary UK. However, it is not a simple clear-cut division between adult and young SLS with regard to ‘tradition’. In my data, it was clear that while adult SLS were far more attuned to the narratives of Somali ‘traditions’, it would be a mistake to assume that ALL young SLS reject the entire set of Somali moral stories. Furthermore,

it would also be a mistake to assume that ALL adult SLS complies with a set of ‘traditional’ narratives of Somali cultural practices. Some adult SLS show little intimations of modern stances such as aligning with certain aspects of Somali ‘tradition’ while distancing themselves from other ethnic particularities. In the forthcoming section, my data shows how my informants attempted to reproduce the discourses of the salience of kinship, clan affiliation and the role of elders in a modern, urban context. It also reveals some of the muted tensions that emerge from non-compliance with this particular aspect of Somali ‘tradition’.

5.1 Kinship, clan affiliation and the role of elders

Over the period of my research, adult SLS regularly communicated a set of discourses about the interlocking themes of family ties and clan affiliation and the role of elders. The following subsections reveal how these adults attempted to reproduce and maintain these alleged ‘traditional’ cultural practices at my research site in their telling of a set of moral stories. However, while some elements of claimed Somali ‘traditions’ were successfully maintained, the following sections suggest that some SLS youth encountered difficulties with comprehending certain ethnic particularities. This section also shows emerging moments of tensions when some SLS youth contest adult SLS’ telling of certain ‘traditional’ moral stories.

5.1.1 Compliance with ‘traditional’ kinship relations

During fieldwork, I noticed that some members of SLS were closely related by kinship ties. The observed practices and discourses of family ties suggest that for a section of SLS, kinship relations continue to provide the basis of most of their social connections in a modern context. The following episodes show how closely-knit family relations among some members of SLS were maintained in contemporary South London:

Episode 1

I was having a conversation with Farhan (45 years old, Centre Director) about classroom attendance, and a girl (Year 4) ran across us to greet Axmaadeey (male, 47 years old, Maths teacher) with a cuddle. Puzzled, I asked Farhan if this behaviour is typical of Somali children around their teachers and he laughed and said ‘No, that girl is Axmaadeey’s niece, most of us are related here’ (Field notes 05/10/13).

Episode 2:

Jaffar (Male, 10 years old, born in London, Mohamed’s son) walked into the classroom and addressed Axmaadeey by uttering ‘*Abti*’ (maternal uncle in Somali) instead of the typical term of address ‘*maacalin*³¹’ (teacher in Somali) that was used by the other students. Intrigued, I asked Mohamed (45 years old, Senior English teacher) about this particular observation and he replied, ‘That’s because Maacalin Axmaadeey is Jaffar’s uncle!... my wife and Axmaadeey’s wife are sisters... I’m probably related to most of the people in this school (laughs)’ (11/10/13 Field notes).

Episode 3:

At about 3pm, Ahmed’s (11 years old, male, student) father walked in and politely enquired, ‘Where is my son Ahmed?’ Mohamed turned around and calmly said, ‘We have no student named Ahmed here’. Feigning surprise and indignation, the man said ‘My son has been attending this school for 3 years and he is not registered here? I’m here to pay his fees today’. Mohamed clapped his hands, grinned and said ‘Now you’re talking, when I hear money I remember my nephew Ahmed’s enrolment here’ (Field notes 01/03/14).

Episodes 1 to 3 provide a suggestive illustration of the social relationships among a section of SLS. In episode 1, Farhan confirmed the closely related nature of the participants at my research site. In episode 2, Mohamed revealed the nature of his relationship with Axmaadeey while episode 3 offered the jocular nature of Mohamed and his brother’s interaction. The extracts above suggest most SLS are closely related. I am not suggesting that ALL the participants at the site were related by kinship ties but the examples above suggest ‘traditional’ practices of close-knit family ties being the basis of social relationships were maintained in contemporary London. The following subsection examines the ways in which the Somali cultural practice of clan affiliation was practiced and declared by my informants.

³¹ The significance of this term of address will be discussed in chapter 6

5.1.2 The practices and discourses of clan allegiances

In addition to the maintenance of close family ties, the second aspect of my informants' social relationships was their evocations of clan affiliation as a form of social organisation. In this subsection, my informants' telling of clanship seemed to suggest that it is a set of narratives which connects people who have tribal links originating from Somaliland. The data shows how as a group, adult SLS were committed to the maintenance of this Somali ethnic particularity. However, as subjects who have spent the majority of their lives in the UK, young SLS demonstrate a degree of apprehension in trying to grapple with the concept of clanship.

5.1.2 (a) Examples of SLS' compliance with the practices and discourses of clan affiliation

The following examples from my data show how the discourse of clan is evoked by Axmaadeey and Mohamed. These episodes suggest adult SLS yearn to enact the 'traditional' social organisation of clanship in a modern, urban and ethnically diverse context.

Episode 4:

In this episode, Axmaadeey claims that the participants at the school are connected by tribal links which has its origins in Somaliland.

Setting: As a part of my fieldwork, I asked Axmaadeey about the ethnic makeup of the student population at my site during a casual conversation to which he replied:

You know we're all Somalis here, we're from the North, we have tribal links, you know Asad's father lives very close to my house in Somalia... (Field notes 10/11/13).

In the above, it is clear how Axmaadeey signals his alignment with the discourse of clan affiliation and place of origin. Axmaadeey's response specifically identified North Somalia or Somaliland as the initial basis of their social connections. Second, he

communicated the idea that SLS are linked by their tribal allegiances. Although chapter four has illustrated SLS' complex migratory biographies, Axmaadeey claimed their social relationships were formed by tribal allegiances originating from the homeland. Axmaadeey's words communicated his view that tribal allegiances act as the social glue for the participants at the site. Although Axmaadeey himself did not spend a considerable length of time in the homeland prior to his arrival in London (see chapter 4), he was strongly attached to the notion that an aspect of Somali ethnicity is inextricably intertwined with the cultural practice of clan affiliation. The next episode shows another example in which the discourse of clanship was told by Mohamed.

Episode 5

Like Axmaadeey, Mohamed also claimed to have maintained the practice of clan affiliation in South London. In the following example, he also alleged the practice of clanship was maintained by another group of Somalis in London:

we're a tribal people, look, this school is organised by Somalis from the North ... you know Jaffar's school? They're from the south... Somalis like to stick to their own clans (Conversational interview 10/10/13).

In the above, Mohamed's words expressed the view purported by Axmaadeey that Somalis are tribal in nature. Like Axmaadeey, Mohamed identifies with his place of origin and his affiliation to a specific clan. He also claimed that another Somali community organisation in a different London locality was organised along the lines of its members' place of origin and clan affiliation. Further, Mohamed claimed that the narratives of clanship continue to bind groups of Somalis in the UK. He conjured a view that Somalis in the UK practise a way of life in which social relations were based on clan allegiances. However, he did not acknowledge the fact that he is gainfully employed in the public sector in the UK, a scenario where Mohamed must interact with his multi ethnic co-workers. It is also implausible that he did not cultivate social ties with the people that he has interacted with during his complex migration trajectory across multiple countries (see chapter 4). An example is my social relationship with Mohamed, we regularly meet, he has met my children and in turn, I have also met his family. The following episode shows

how an individual's affiliation to a specific clan might act as a mode of identification in contemporary London.

Episode 6

In this episode, the conversation between two adult SLS suggests that one of the functions of clan affiliation is a mode of identification for Somalis in the UK. Preceding the following extract, I was having coffee with Axmaadeey in the teachers' room before Mohamed walked in and exclaimed:

1. Mohamed: You know Ahmed
2. Axmaadeey: Who?
3. Mohamed: Ahmed, Darod, Finsbury Park?
4. Axmaadeey: Yes, I know him (Field notes 14/12/13).

In this example, a 'traditional' mode of identification was expressed in which an individual's identity is closely associated with his/her clan affiliation and location. Here, what is notable is that whereas typical Londoners might identify someone by his or her first name and place of residence, Mohamed and Axmaadeey identified a person by his first name-Ahmed, clan affiliation - Darod and place of residence-Finsbury Park. Darod is one of the major Somali clans (Lewis 1994) that has traditionally controlled a large territory in Somaliland. Mohamed and Axmaadeey in turn, belong to the Isaaq clan, another major clan whose members were traditionally regarded as pastoralists in Somaliland. The invocation of clan in episode 6 in part, suggests that Mohamed and Axmaadeey were committed to reproducing a way of identifying Somali individuals which is evocative of life in small communities in rural areas. In a modern nation state, people are officially identified by surnames. Bureaucracy in modern nation states require surnames on official forms such as birth certificates, applications for driving licenses, passports etc. Tribal or clan allegiances is not acknowledged. But for Axmaadeey and Mohmaed, identification based on clanship remains salient in contemporary London. The following episode offers another example of the invocation of clanship by Mohamed in his account of his friend's alleged ability to observe clan related practices in London.

Episode 7

This episode shows how the discourses of clanship might have been inflected by the lived experiences of life in London. In this episode, I was in the midst of photocopying my teaching materials at the corner of the school when Mohamed came in after visiting his Somali friend's community centre in another London location.

I tell you Steve, Ahmed has got it right... He has the whole tribe attending and paying fees! He runs 4 sessions on Saturdays and rents out his space to the council on weekdays! Now that's a smart man, Steve'. (Field notes 14/12/13).

Mohamed's words above communicated his admiration for Ahmed's ability to maintain clanship related practices in a contemporary urban context. His claim that Ahmed could impose 'traditional' practices in another location in London and his ability to group members of his clan to act as a collective was valorised. Further, Mohamed also expressed his admiration for Ahmed's resourcefulness in maximising revenue by securing a contract with his local council. Mohamed's words suggest that a 'smart man' is recognised by his ability to maintain clan ties and be a "savvy" individual with regard to securing resources in a modern society.

Subsection 5.1.2 (a) provided examples of some adult SLS' self-declared stances and practices in relation to clan affiliation. Axmaadeey and Mohamed hold the view that compliance with 'traditional' clan related practices is possible and *should* be maintained. However, in a modern, urban context, it is not plausible that Mohamed and Axmaadeey were able to exclusively 'stick' to their own clan, they have interacted with Somalis who pledge allegiance to other clans and more importantly, they did not acknowledge their interactions with the multi ethnic people they have had to encounter in their everyday lives in London. Their self-declarations and practices of clanship construct them as a bounded group who were rooted in 'traditional' cultural practices in an urban, multi-ethnic context in modernity.

5.1.2 (b) SLS youth and the inherent difficulties with the notion of clanship in modernity

In this subsection, my data suggests that SLS youth as a group, faced problems with grasping the complex notion of clanship. It shows how a group of young people who have spent the majority of their lives in modern societies try to come to terms with the practice of clanship.

Episode 8

Here, the topic of clanship emerged during an excerpt of classroom talk among young SLS. It demonstrates how young SLS identify with clan as an aspect of their Somali ethnicities, but they displayed a limited understanding of this concept. In this episode, Nasra (female, 16 years old) walked into the class with a puzzled look on her face. She told the participants that Mohamed had informed her that they were related. When she questioned Mohamed about the nature of their relationship, he told Nasra to do her own research. This exercise presented problems for young SLS, as Abuubakar (male, 17 years old) remarked:

Tsk, that's hard, people of English ethnicity can search their family trees [Classroom recording 25/01/14]

In the above, Abuubakar communicated his view that tracing Somalis' ancestral heritage is more complex compared with 'people of English ethnicity'. He argued that while 'English' people could trace their ancestral heritage by simply accessing UK historical parish and other written records, it is not possible for Abuubakar to research his lineage in this way. As most Somalis are relative newcomers to the UK, they simply haven't been in the country long enough. Among my group of informants, the adults were born either in Somaliland or in one of the countries in their migratory trajectories. Further, perhaps due to the Somali tradition of oral transmission of ancestral information, Asad (male, 16 years old) suggested that researching one's lineage requires a consultation with elders of the community:

We talk to an old person, they know every single thing, point blank. They will tell you every name [Classroom recording 25/01/14]

Asad's words expressed an understanding of the processes involved in researching one's ancestral heritage among people of Somali descent. That said, his reference to a clan elder as 'an old person' suggests that for him, clan identification is not something typically practiced in modern societies. He does not reject his clan identity, but his words suggest it is something closely associated with the older generation. Nasra attempted to provide her knowledge of the subject by adding:

They ask you for your tribe... Then they'll find out, like that.. And then they will ask for your surname [Classroom recording 25/01/14]

In the above, Nasra demonstrated a slightly greater depth of expertise than Asad by reproducing Mohamed's discourse on clanship as a mode of identification for Somalis as highlighted in episode 6. In her words, tribal allegiances supersede surnames for Somalis but Nasra's apprehensiveness in describing the concept did not demonstrate a high degree of competence in the topic. Further, her use of the personal pronoun 'they' in reference to the 'clan elders' who observe clanship related practices indicated her slight detachment from this cultural practice. Subsequently, Abuubakar tried to provide a bit more clarity on how clan identifications might work:

They start reading it, sir. They know everything, know every person. They, like, maybe know their tribes. So it's that. And you have your own certain number. It's like that [Classroom recording 25/01/14]

In the above, Abuubakar attempted to offer a more precise understanding of clanship. 'They' in his utterance probably referred to clan elders and 'reading it' alluded to Somalis' oral tradition whereas in a modern nation state, details such as date of birth, name and surname are officially recorded by the UK state bureaucracy. Perhaps in this aspect, some Somalis are still rooted in their oral tradition. However, like Asad and Nasra, Abuubakar distances himself from this practice by using the personal pronoun 'they' to refer to people who are well versed in how clan identities work. Intrigued, I asked Abuubakar what he meant by 'they start reading it' and having a 'certain number' in his preceding utterance:

Steve: What do you mean by number?

. Abuubakar: It's, it's too complicated (Classroom recording 25/01/14)

In the above, Abuubakar conceded that the concept was ‘too complicated’ for him to provide a lucid explanation, he did not have the required knowledge or expertise. In this subsection, Abuubakar, Asad and Nasra have exhibited some fragments of knowledge of traditional modes of researching their ancestry in relation to clan affiliation. Episode 8 suggests that as a group, SLS youth did not communicate their disavowal from their tribal allegiances, they accept that the nature of Somali ethnicity is somehow related to the notion of clanship. As Modood (2005) argues, ethnic identity is not necessarily limited only to participation in cultural practices as second-generation young people of immigrant parents who despite the decline in their participation in cultural practices (i.e. language, religion), still retain allegiance (Modood 2005: 469). However, SLS youth’s apprehensive and vague understanding of the notion of clanship shows a lack of in-depth knowledge of the topic. In essence, episode 8 shows how clanship is a notion that is present in young SLS’ lives due to their exposure to a set of narratives on alleged authentic Somali ethnicity. Unsurprisingly, in contrast with the adults, the young people gave the impression when they referred to clan, they haven’t got a firm grasp of the concept. This group has lived most of their lives in a modern, nation state.

The preceding subsections provided some examples of what the notion of clanship might mean to my informants as a group. The episodes in 5.1.2 (a) show adult SLS’ strong commitments to maintaining clan related practices and discourses and they believe that this aspect of Somali ‘tradition’ could be lived in London. Their desire to reproduce the discourses and narratives of clanship show the depth of their attachments to what they viewed to be authentic Somali ‘tradition’. Unsurprisingly, as 5.1.2 (b) has shown, SLS youth demonstrated a superficial understanding of the concept of clan affiliation. Their words show glimmerings of understanding of this aspect of Somali ethnic particularity perhaps as a result to their exposure to the narratives of clan by their parents. The above episode suggests that life in a modern, urban context might have shaped SLS youth’s faltering understanding of the complexities of clan affiliation. However, as shown in 5.1.2 (b), the limited understanding of clanship as demonstrated in the episode does not mean that young SLS reject this aspect of their Somali ethnicities as even loose attachments have qualities, these narratives identify SLS and connect them with other diasporic Somalis.

5.1.3 The role of elders

This subsection shows how a set of discourses on the exalted position of elders was circulated among my key informants. It shows how adult SLS routinely embed the importance of elders in their talk at the school. However, this subsection also reveals adult SLS' distress at the diminishing role of elders in a modern context. Some of the examples also show how tensions emerge from the non-compliance with the previously unchallenged position of Somali elders in modernity.

5.1.3 (a) The discourse of the prominent role of elders

In my data, adult SLS regularly communicated a set of moral stories about the importance of the role of elders in Somaliland. In the following, Mohamed emphasizes the importance of unforced deference that should be accorded to people who are recognised as elders in the Somali community.

Episode 9

For Mohamed, an important aspect of Somali ethnicity is the respect that is traditionally accorded to elders. For him, elders should be given unquestioning respect and this topic emerged from the following episode of Mohamed's classroom talk during his Year 4 English lesson. In a lesson with a focus on writing, Mohamed wanted his students to compose a letter of appeal to the Local Education authority for a longer summer vacation. To provide some ideas for his students, Mohamed used the example of their summer pilgrimages to Somaliland:

I want you to write persuasively.... You know summer vacations? You get only 6 weeks! To go to home to Somaliland... to see your family, is 6 weeks enough? You have to see your family, your father will have to see the elders... I want you to appeal to make summer vacation longer (Mohamed's self-recorded classroom talk 12/04/14)

In the above, Mohamed attempted to transmit two aspects of his notion of Somali ethnicities. One, 'home' is linked to Somaliland even though the majority of his students were not born there. Second, Mohamed communicated the importance of the role of elders. He tried to enforce the idea that elders in Somaliland deserve unquestioning

respect. Mohamed's quote expressed his desire to maintain the prominent role of elders in modernity. However, as the following examples show, Mohamed's and Axmaadeey's attempts to impose the role of elders among the participants at the site were at times contested.

5.1.3 (b) Points of tensions over the imposition of 'traditional' role of elders in modernity

In this subsection, the episodes show how some adult SLS attempt to transmit the importance of the role of elders to the student participants at my research site. The ensuing examples show how adult SLS expect unquestioning respect and deference from the student-participants. However, the following also reveal some of the tensions that emerged from the non-or partial compliance with the narratives and discourses of the role of elders among young SLS. The data suggests that in contemporary London, the importance of elders among young SLS has been reduced.

Episode 10

In this episode of casual conversation among my adult informants, Axmaadeey tried to enforce the practice of deference to elders among young SLS.

Axmaadeey, Mohamed and Farhan were talking with an elderly man at the reception area during a lunch break. As usual, students were required to wait outside in the hallway until one of the teachers invite them to enter. I was making photocopies for my afternoon session when two Year 9 boys strolled in. This immediately provoked Axmaadeey to utter 'Wareya'³² (Oi)! What are you doing? Can't you see the elders are talking?'. The boys shrugged and slowly walked out of the reception area. (Fieldnotes 12/04/14).

As one of the participants in the discussion, Axmaadeey's utterance positions himself as an 'elder'³³. Although the boys complied by leaving the room, they communicated their indifference to the traditional respect granted to elders by shrugging their shoulders before leaving the room. In part, the episode shows how the boys had to be *forced* by Axmaadeey to conform to 'tradition'. In London, perhaps this is an indication of the loosening of an

³² The significance of 'Wareya' will be discussed in chapter 6.

³³ in alignment with Lewis's observation that in Somalia, '[a]ll adult men are classed as elders ... Respect is attached to age' (Lewis 1961: 197).

attachment to an aspect of Somali ethnicity in which members considered to be elders are automatically granted respect.

Episode 11

During my fieldwork, Mohamed regularly attributed the behavioural problems of young Somalis to the lack of a 'traditional' family structure in parents where elders wield significant influence on the young. This topic was triggered during a conversation about some aspects of a boy's behaviour at the site:

My brother-in-law, Nus... his nephew they came 4 years ago, beautiful boy, polite and recites the Quran. You know he doesn't come anymore? I told him 'what gives you the right to make this decision?' If I tell his mom in Kenya, the elders will tie him to the tree and whip him! He has changed so much! 3 years ago! He was the brightest, politest child you'll ever know... the family don't have influence here, it's the environment, it spoils everything. Hah! This place lacks the structure we have in Somalia, the elders say something and everybody follows without question. This is what we lack here, that's the problem our kids face... especially the boys.. they change 360 degrees change! (Self-recording 01/03/14)

In the above, Mohamed expressed a view on parenting that was shaped by 'traditional' discourses in which children are expected to be docile, and do not have a right to make decisions. Mohamed also subscribes to the idea that children are regarded as a collective responsibility of the community in which elders have the right to enforce a form of corporal punishment (Harris 2004). Mohamed was convinced that the diminishing authority of elders is one of the factors for misbehaviour and claimed that life in the UK is the crux of behavioural problems among some Somali boys. For him, life in the modern context has spoilt Somali boys, and he yearned for the traditional family structure in which '*everybody*' is expected to unquestioningly obey elders' instructions. The changes in family and social structures and hierarchies as a resultant effect of re-locating to the UK are a source of distress for Mohamed. Mohamed finds it difficult to come to terms with the diminishing role of elders, he cannot accept the fact that his nephew had the option to '*choose*' to not participate at the site. The following example shows how a SLS youth, Abuubakar reproduced Mohamed's concern about the waning influence of Somali elders.

Episode 12

This episode shows how Mohamed's view on the diminishing influence of elders in a modern context was shared by Abuubakar in the following excerpt from a classroom recording. Prior to this exchange, Abuubakar and his classmates were discussing the merits of traditional ways of settling disputes that were mediated by community elders. Intrigued by the conversation, I asked Abuubakar about his view on the influence of elders in the UK and he replied:

the people does [sic] not respect the elderly or the wise people in this country... no one's gonna respect that person just because he's a clan elder or wise man [classroom recording 05/04/14]

Abuubakar's words echo Mohamed's view regarding the diminishing status of Somali elders in the UK. His words acknowledge that in contemporary London, 'clan elders or wise men' were unable to exert their influence solely based on their age and social status. Abuubakar reproduced Axmaadeey's and Mohamed's narratives of respect for Somali elders in his description of elders as 'wise men' but he also seemed to suggest that elders were mostly viewed as a group rooted in 'traditional' practices. This set of narratives on the role of elders do not resonate with the younger generations who grew up in contemporary urban contexts. Human subjects in modern contexts are not overly concerned with the rules and customs that were espoused by older generations.

5.2 Practising Muslim 'traditions'

From my observations of SLS' narratives and practices during my fieldwork, it is clear that my informants embrace their Muslim identity. A section of SLS fastidiously observed Muslim rituals such as daily prayers and fasting during Ramadhan. While this set of practices appear to be important for the participants, it was not enacted in a straightforward manner. What this section offers is the previously unanalysed ways in which SLS' identifications with Islam were invoked by their observed practices and narratives with reference to religion. This section argues that while all my informants readily identify with Islam, not all of them comply with a certain set of Muslim practices. In addition, there were also visible signs of tension, on occasions when participants did not observe certain rituals. Further, as we will see, one of the SLS youth, Asad was at

times strongly committed to reproducing the narratives of certain aspects of Somali ‘traditions’. However, Asad also commits what might be viewed as blasphemous acts and at times, tries to influence other young SLS to transgress Muslim principles.

5.2.1 Compliance with the practice of daily prayers

From my observations of the typical practices at my research site, I noticed that most male members of SLS regularly congregate and took part in prayer³⁴ rituals at around midday during the school’s lunch recess. Prior to partaking in these rituals, the teachers and a small section of the boys would go to the toilet to wash their hands, face and feet to perform the practice of ablution³⁵. Although some of the girls regularly partake in prayer rituals, it is worth mentioning that they perform their Muslim obligations in a separate room. This is an indication that gender segregation for prayers was practiced at the site. The students who do not choose to participate in these rituals were typically ushered out of the space in advance of the prayers. This observation revealed that among young SLS, there were discernible differences with regard to their practices of Islam. During prayer events, groups of about four to eight male adults and some student participants performed these ritualised acts of religious devotion towards the direction of Mecca (highlighted with an arrow on the ceiling). Axmaadeey or Mohamed typically initiated the prayer rituals that included reciting verses in Classical Arabic and the performance of a range of bodily motions and postures such as open hands on each side of the face and bowing and kneeling at specific intervals. These acts of religious devotion typically last for about 15 to 20 minutes. The routine acts of religious worship at the school communicated this section of SLS’ commitments to Islam, they fulfil the ‘second of the five pillars of practical religion in Islam’ (Hughes 1994: 465). In short, the above subsection revealed how a group of SLS comply with the Muslim ritual of praying but as I have shown, this practice is not uniformly adhered to. The following example shows how there isn’t a simple dichotomy between the adult and young participants with regard to observing the practice of praying.

³⁴According to Hughes (1994), prayer ‘is a devotional exercise which every Muslim is required to render to God at least five times a day, namely, at the early morning, midday, afternoon, evening, and night’ (p 465).

³⁵ This practice is founded on the authority of the Quran, surah. V. 8 ‘O believers! When you prepare yourself for prayer, wash your face and hands up to the elbows and wipe your heads and feet up to the ankles’ (Hughes 1994: 3)

5.2.1 (a) Examples of non-compliance with prayer rituals

My data in this subsection shows that while a Muslim identity was freely embraced by all adult SLS, adherence to the Islamic ritual of performing daily prayers varied among individual members.

Episode 13

The following episode shows how an adult SLS, Farhan (male, 45 years old, Centre Director) does not always comply with the obligation to pray.

At about 1pm, Axmaadeey instructed Abuubakar to clear the prayer area in advance of the afternoon prayers. Farhan was talking to two other male adults by the reception area. Upon noticing Axmaadeey's call to prayer, Farhan motioned for the adults to adjourn to the hallway to continue their conversation [Field notes 12/04/14]

This observation above does not suggest that Farhan disavows his Muslim identity. As pointed out in chapter 4, he regularly wore a white rounded skullcap that marks him out as person who exhibits his allegiance to Islam. However as shown in the example above, he regularly abstains from partaking in communal prayers at the site. He identifies with Islam, but he does commit himself to observing prayer rituals fastidiously like Axmaadeey and Mohamed. The episode above illustrates how some of my informants' self-identifications as Muslims were indexed by aspects of their ritualised acts of religious worship. However, individual SLS exhibited variable degrees of compliance with the Muslim obligation to observe daily prayer rituals. These variations in compliance with performing daily prayers were not surprising, it would be absurd to expect ALL members of SLS to uniformly observe the entire set of Muslim obligations. The upcoming episode provides an example of a way young SLS' show part compliance with prayer rituals.

Episode 14

During fieldwork, I observed that a section of SLS youth routinely observed the ritual of praying at designated times. Abuubakar, Shamso and Naciimo would typically ask for permission to leave the class to perform their prayers. Like Axmaadeey and Mohamed, this group of SLS youth exhibited their compliance with the one of the obligations that Muslims are expected to fulfil. However, in the example below, Abuubakar and Asad appear to have committed an act of transgression:

At about 1.15 pm, Asad and Abuubakar raised their hands and asked to be excused from the class for them to perform their prayers. I nodded and continued teaching. After about 20 minutes, I was concerned and decided to locate them. As I walked around the corner, the boys were watching the Arsenal versus Liverpool football match on Asad's smartphone [field notes 01/03/14]

In the example above, Abuubakar and Asad identify with the ritual of offering prayers as a practice indicative of Muslims who observe the 'five pillars of Islam' (Hughes 1994). Their request to leave for prayers communicated their wish to comply with the ritual of praying but in fact, Abuubakar and Asad had transgressed. Their request for permission to leave the class for prayers was made to watch their favourite football team. In short, this subsection has shown some of the variations among individual SLS with regard to the question of Muslim prayer rituals. The subsequent subsection shows varying degrees of compliance with practicing fasting rituals among individual SLS during the holy month of Ramadhan.

5.2.2 The practice of the Muslim ritual of fasting

Over the course of my fieldwork, I noted that a section of SLS at my research site were deeply committed to fulfilling the Muslim obligation of fasting during the month of Ramadhan. Fasting is the fourth foundation of Islam and practising Muslims are obliged to fast during the entire month of Ramadhan (Hughes 1994). Among some SLS, the practice of fasting was viewed to be an important ritual in fulfilling their obligations as Muslims and the teachers regularly attempt to remind the students about the importance of fasting. In the following, my data shows the variations in which SLS comply with this Muslim ritual. However, it was also noticeable that not all SLS strictly observed this ritual and the following examples show how low-level tensions emerged when some participants did not comply with the obligation to fast during Ramadhan.

5.2.2. (a) Compliance and part-compliance with fasting rituals

At the site, I noticed most of the parents and older students generally did not openly consume food or drinks during the holy month of Ramadhan. In the following encounter, some of my informants claimed to fully comply with the Muslim obligation to fast even though they found it hard to do so in London.

Episode 15

This episode is an account of my adult informants' views on practicing the Muslim ritual of fasting in South London. The encounter transpired on a humid afternoon during the month of Ramadhan. While wiping sweat from his brow and looking visibly distressed, Mohamed lamented about the problem with complying with the ritual of fasting during the long summer days in the UK.

Mohamed: Steve, I tell you. It is the long hours that's killing me but I need to do it, it makes me feel good when I get to eat

Axmaadeey: It's hard but yes, we all fast in my house. Abuubakar (Axmaadeey's son) has been fasting since he was 9 years old. It's hard to do it here but it makes you feel good (Casual conversation 30/06/14).

Mohamed's and Axmaadeey's words above demonstrate the extent to which they claimed to fulfil their obligation to fast during Ramadhan. Although they found this practice difficult to maintain, fasting seems to provide a sense of fulfillment as it makes them 'feel good'. During the conversation, Farhan also communicated his desire to fulfil this obligation, but he found the ritual difficult to maintain:

I do but not the whole month, as you get older, you cannot resist not drinking or not having some bite for, you know, for all those hours [Casual conversation 30/06/14].

Compared with Mohamed and Axmaadeey, Farhan's words seemed to communicate a different level of commitment to fast during Ramadhan. Farhan's account suggests he partly complies with the ritual of fasting. In a sense, the episode above shows how Mohamed, Axmaadeey and Farhan might communicate their varying degrees of adherence to certain Islamic principles. What is notable about the interaction above is the absence of a response from Mohamed or Axmaadeey. Perhaps his status as a director of the school prevented the other adults from making evaluative comments on Farhan's loosening of attachment to observing the Muslim ritual of fasting. Farhan's relative detachment from Muslim rituals also merits further attention. As I have noted in the preceding section, unlike Mohamed and Axmaadeey, Farhan did not always observe prayer rituals and in the above example, he declared that he does not steadfastly observe the ritual of fasting throughout the month of Ramadhan. Farhan's self-declarations and observed practices suggest that he is not fully committed to observing certain Muslim rituals. In a sense, Farhan appears to align with some of the features of life in an

superdiverse urban context. In the South London context, he is able to choose to self-identify as a Muslim, but he also has the choice to comply (or not) with a set of Islamic rituals. In the following subsection, I highlight some examples of the tensions that emerge from SLS teachers' desire to impose fasting rituals on their students at the site.

5.2.2 (b) Tensions arising from non-compliance with fasting rituals

Over the course of my fieldwork, I noticed that Mohamed and Axmaadeey routinely attempted to impose the ritual of fasting during Ramadhan on the students at the school. However, the examples below suggest that some young SLS do not comply and at times, transgress by openly consuming food and drinks in the presence of their peers. The examples below show how these acts of transgression caused a certain degree of distress for the teachers.

Episode 16

Prior to this example of an act of transgression by a young SLS below, Mohamed was preparing to teach his Year 8 students by handing out the session's worksheets:

Nusra (male, 11 years old, student) opened a bag of crisps but before he could consume its contents, Mohamed stared at him and said: 'Why aren't you fasting? You're old enough to fast, you should at least show some respect to the people who are fasting here! Even Jaffar (Somali descent, 11 years old) here is fasting'. Nusra responded by saying his parents let him skip fasting if he wished. Mohamed shook his head and said, 'That's the problem with your parents! And then they will come to me and complain that you're misbehaving! (Field notes 11/07/14).

Mohamed's words above communicated his disapproval of the boy's act of non-compliance with the ritual of fasting during Ramadhan. In the episode, Mohamed's words initially chastised the boy for not fasting, but he also communicated his partial acceptance that not all SLS practise the Muslim ritual of fasting during Ramadhan. In the episode, Mohamed valorised Jaffar for fasting, he was constructed as an exemplar for the other students. Subsequently, Nusra's claim that his parents were not strictly committed to fasting rituals caused a degree of distress for Mohamed. Mohamed found it problematic that religious principles were not imposed by Nusra's family and in his view, deviation from Muslim rituals is the root cause of the problem of misbehaviour among some young

SLS. In a sense, he communicated a world view that is structured by a version of Islamic principles in which there are absolute ‘right’ ways to behave. Perhaps Nusra and his family’s non-compliance with the Muslim ritual of fasting is further indication of the variations in fulfilling Islamic practices among SLS. The following episode shows another example of the emerging tensions from some young participants’ non-compliance with fasting during Ramadhan.

Episode 17

Like Mohamed, Axmaadeey regularly attempted to impose the practice of fasting among his students during Ramadhan but tensions emerged on occasions that young SLS openly flouted this Muslim obligation. In the example below, a certain level of distress emerged when a young participant did not seem to be overly concerned over the practice of fasting.

Axmaadeey was handing out the worksheets for the students and a boy opened a can of Coke. Axmaadeey glared at the boy and said ‘Do you know it’s Ramadhan? Who said you can have a drink?’ The boy had a gulp of the drink and proceeded to dispose the can in the bin. Axmaadeey scowled at the boy and shook his head [Field notes 11/07/14]

The episode above demonstrates a way in which Axmaadeey tried to impose the Islamic ritual of fasting on his students during Ramadhan. Axmaadeey’s words suggest that student participants were expected to observe this ritual or at the very least, show respect by not consuming food in the presence of SLS who fast. The boy who committed the transgression demonstrated partial compliance with Axmaadeey’s utterance as he reluctantly disposes the can of soft drink but could not resist having an extra drink. This boy’s act of transgression appears to be a source of tension for Axmaadeey because of his inability to impose the Muslim ritual of fasting on a section of his students.

Subsection 5.2.2 demonstrated the tensions that emerged from young SLS’ acts of transgression against the Muslim ritual of fasting. The adults’ wish to impose the Muslim ritual of fasting was not readily accepted by all young SLS in contemporary South London. As shown in the preceding, there were observable variations with which adult

and young SLS claimed to comply with fasting rituals. The following subsection explores some of the tensions that emerged during moments when one of my young informants committed an act of transgression against a particular Islamic principle.

5.2.3 Young SLS and emerging tensions from non-compliance with Islamic principles

During my period of fieldwork, young SLS in my focus group openly embraced their Muslim identity in their self-declarations and for some, in their ways of dressing. However, the topic of their compliance (or not) with certain Islamic principles unexpectedly emerged during the following moments of classroom talk. In the first example, tensions emerged when Asad offered sweets that contained an ingredient which some other students think is not permissible to consume for Muslims. In the second encounter, Asad triggered the topic of legality in modernity which appeared to have presented a moral dilemma for some of his classmates.

Episode 18

This episode suggests that among young SLS, there are discernible differences in their degrees of compliance with the principle of not consuming foods that are considered to be ‘non-halal’ as outlined by certain strands of Islamic teachings. In this encounter, Asad appeared in class with a bag of Haribo sweets and passed it around his peers. Most of them started enjoying the sweets but before consuming her sweet, Shamso remarked:

Hey! Did you check if this has the pork gelatin³⁶

[Classroom recording 05/04/14]

By voicing her concern that the sweets might contain pork gelatin, Shamso expressed her desire to comply with one of the principles of Islam concerning what constitutes halal or non-halal food (Al-Qaradawi 2007). In this episode, Shamso made a conscious effort to

³⁶ Flavourless food derived from collagen obtained from various animal body parts. It is commonly used as a gelling agent in food, pharmaceutical drugs, vitamin capsules, photography, and cosmetic manufacturing.

ensure that the food she was about to consume is halal. Without looking at the bag of sweets, Asad said:

Of course it's halal, what you talking about? [Classroom recording 05/04/14]

Asad's response of 'it's halal' communicated his identity as a Muslim who is aware of the importance of exclusively consuming halal food. However, Shamso was unconvinced and she snatched the bag from Asad to inspect the list of ingredients. Alarmed by what she saw as an ingredient which she considered to be non-halal, Shamso exclaimed:

This is not halal, you idiot [Classroom recording 05/04/14]

Shamso's observation caused the other participants to spit out the offending sweets. They demonstrated compliance with the Muslim principle that certain foods are not permissible to consume. Their response suggests this group of young SLS comply with this aspect of Islamic principle. However, instead of spitting out the sweets like the other participants, Asad stuffed the rest of the contents of the bag into his mouth and flippantly said

Yeah, I've committed *haram*³⁷, so? [Classroom recording 05/04/14]

Unlike the other participants in this encounter, Asad's open display of consuming the sweets demonstrated his non-compliance with this particular aspect of Islamic principle. He does not appear to be overly concerned with the kinds of foods that he consumes. Asad's behaviour caused Abuubakar to remark:

He's an idiot sir, he's not a good Muslim. [Classroom recording 05/04/14]

The exchanges above offered an example of how momentary flashpoints might occur as a result of the interaction between the practices and beliefs of Islam and life in contemporary and relatively secular society in modernity. However, it was not a straightforward case of Asad who displays degrees of non-compliance with Islamic principles while the rest of the group are strongly committed to the adhering to certain principles of Islam. For example, Shamso and Abuubakar demonstrated a strong commitment to ensuring they only consume halal food and the duo tried to impose their

³⁷ an Arabic term meaning sinful. In Islamic jurisprudence, haram is used to refer to any act that is forbidden by Allah, and is one of five Islamic commandments (Hughes 1994)

beliefs on their fellow students. What is notable was the lack of input from Nasra and Safiyo during the exchange above. After disposing their sweets, Nasra and Safiyo laughed at Asad's remarks. Unlike Shamso and Abuubakar, Nasra and Safiyo did not act overly concerned about consuming the sweets. They paid lip service to the discourse of halal food but unlike Shamso, were happy to eat the sweets without checking the list of ingredients in the bag. The example above provided a suggestive illustration of the emerging tensions between individuals who were committed to certain Islamic principles and someone like Asad. In the following episode, degrees of tension emerged when the notion of legality in a modern nation state did not sit well with Abuubakar's world view that is informed by Islamic moral precepts.

Episode 19

In this episode of classroom talk, the topic of 'haram' practices emerged during a discussion about how charity organizations operate in the UK. Prior to the interaction, I tasked the informants with writing a proposal for a fundraising project for a charity of their choice. After a period of silence, Asad opened the discussion and claimed that in the UK, charity organisations do not have a legal obligation to channel all the funds that are raised to the intended recipients of the donations:

You have to give a certain amount to the people... like 20 percent you have to give to charity. The rest you can take it... You can take eighty percent of the money [Classroom recording 12/04/14]

Asad's opinion above expressed his lived experiences as a resident of a modern, nation state. Although he might not have provided accurate details, Asad knew charitable organisations are not legally required to direct all the funds they raise to the causes they claimed to champion. Asad's revelation caused a certain amount of distress for Abuubakar as he exclaimed:

You would burn in hell if you take things that were meant for charity [Classroom recording 12/04/14]

Abuubakar's words communicated his world view that is partly shaped by Islamic principles. Giving alms is considered as one of the five pillars of Islam (Hughes 1994:

201) and taking something that was meant for charity was viewed as a serious transgression by Abuubakar. For Asad, it is not a question of moral precept but one of legality:

Legally, I meant legally you can [Classroom recording 12/04/14]

Asad's sentiments signal his slight detachment from Islamic moral values, his world views on what is right or wrong is shaped the notion of legality. However, Abuubakar challenged Asad's stance in relation to Islam:

You are okay with this... legally or is it haram? [Classroom recording 12/04/14]

Abuubakar's question above indicated the ways his moral values were shaped by Islamic principles. He wanted to know where Asad stands with regard to the issue of whether something considered legal could also be viewed as 'haram'. In response, Asad explained:

I'm not talking about haram or not haram, obviously its haram [Classroom recording 12/04/14]

Asad's words above indicated his understanding that the issue would be interpreted as 'haram' under Islamic principles. However, he pointed out that he was not referring to the question of charity via the lens of Islam. Abuubakar instantly challenged Asad by uttering:

Then why would you do, why would you do something that's haram?' [Classroom recording 12/04/14]

Abuubakar's utterances in this episode suggests that he attends to certain Islamic principles and that Muslims shouldn't engage in practices considered to be 'haram'. However, this causes a dilemma for some young SLS as the moral precepts of Islamic faith do not always align with the concept of legality in the UK. The examples in this subsection has shown the tensions that emerged when certain Islamic principles and moral precepts chafe against the notion of legality in a modern nation state. Asad does not reject his Muslim identity but as a person who was born and raised in London, he is conditioned by life in a modern nation state in which laws were relatively detached from religious precepts.

Summary

In summary, section 5.2 reveals my informants' discourses and observed practices of certain Islamic rituals. As I have shown, Mohamed and Axmaadeey exhibited their compliance with a range of religious rituals and have tried but not always succeeding, to impose Islamic values and practices on their students. In general, this group of adults' displays of observing prayer and fasting rituals index themselves as practicing Muslims. Among the young, there is a noticeably looser attachment to certain discourses and practices of Islam. However, it would be a mistake to assume that all adults SLS were deeply religious and that all young SLS reject or disavow their Muslim identity. As section 5.2.2 has shown, Farhan freely identified as a Muslim but his partial compliance with a set of Islamic rituals might be a sign of his relative detachment from observing religious rituals. In short, Muhammed, Axmaadeey, Abuubakar and Shamsu were committed to observing a range of Islamic values and practices but the other key informants revealed looser ties to religion. Section 5.2 has also shown how low-level tensions emerged when some aspects of Islamic principles were imposed at the site. In short, it has shown how as a group, SLS' practice of Islam should be understood as the compliance/partial/non-compliance with certain Muslim principles in a modern, urban context. As a group, my informants regularly communicated their Muslim identity but strict adherence to the obligatory Islamic practices is difficult in a modern context. The following section explores the question of gender relations at my research site. It also shows examples of the emerging tensions from the telling of a set of narratives on 'traditional' gendered roles in contemporary South London.

5.3 Gender relations

At my research site, I have met and engaged with a range of SLS students and parents of both genders. Apart from the distinct practice of gender segregation during prayer rituals, the school was a space in which adult and young SLS of both genders freely mingled. However, as I embedded my presence at the school, I noticed that a small section of SLS males at times, evoked the discourse of 'traditional' gender relations in London. However, the subsequent subsections suggest that muted tensions emerge when SLS' narratives of 'traditional' gender relations were challenged by perspectives that are aligned with the notion of gender equality in a modern context.

5.3.1 The discourse of gender policing

From my many conversations with Mohamed, I noticed that he had a particular view of how gender relations among SLS should be enacted in London. In the example below, Mohamed thinks Somali ethnicity could be preserved by preventing Somali females from developing relationships with males of other ethnicities.

Episode 20

The topic of gender policing emerged during a casual conversation with Mohamed about inter-ethnic marriages at a café located near my research site. The topic of this conversation emerged when we noticed one of the adult male SLS parents drive past the cafe with his white British wife in a two-door sports coupe. As I noticed that he was visibly displeased, I asked Mohamed whether inter-ethnic relationships are common among SLS. According to Mohamed,

There are quite a few stray ones but only the boys marry outside, we protect the girls. We don't let them marry outsiders (Fieldnotes 13/03/14)

In his words, inter-ethnic marriages are viewed as the practice of 'stray' Somali men whilst Somali women are 'protected' from such deviations. He expressed a 'traditional' narrative in which women are properties that belong to the men, women do not have a right to marry people of other ethnicities. Mohamed's words express his attachment to the notion that relationships among SLS females could be monitored and controlled. He also thinks that mixed marriages somehow cause problems with the transmission of aspects of Somali ethnicities such as language and religious commitment to Islam:

See, this is what happens when some of them are a bit adventurous and marry a white woman and have mixed race children. His son, Adam, attends my class but can't speak Somali or pray properly (Fieldnotes 13/03/14).

In the above, Mohamed articulated his view on why it is important to preserve the ethnic purity of Somalis in the UK by avoiding inter-ethnic marriages. He implied that aspects of Somali heritage such as language and adherence to religious practices were compromised by inter-ethnic unions. He claimed Adam's lack of proficiency in Somali

and his inability to pray were a direct consequence of mixed marriages. However, this view raises another issue since Chapter 4 highlights the fact that even ‘pure’ Somali youngsters encounter problems with speaking in Somali language and section 2 of this chapter has also shown that as a group, SLS’ observed practices and accounts of their compliance (or not) with Muslim rituals did not show a uniform adherence to religious orthopraxy. In short, Mohamed’s account in this episode revealed his distress emerging from what he views to be an act of transgression by Adam’s father.

5.3.2 SLS’ discourses of ‘traditional’ gendered vocations

During my encounters with SLS, it was observed that some of the participants talk about Somali gendered vocation in particular ways. Although this topic did not dominate my data, this subsection shows how my informants tell a set of narratives of gendered roles.

5.3.2 (a) Consensus on ‘traditional’ gendered vocations

This subsection shows some examples of the narratives of ‘traditional’ Somali gendered vocations. In the first example, my young informants seem to have a general consensus on the topic of ‘traditional’ gendered vocations in Somalia. In the second example, a young Somali female trainee teacher thinks deep rooted beliefs in gendered vocations has affected her ability to manage the behaviour of Somali children at the site.

Episode 21

The example below suggests that my young informants agree with the idea that traditional gendered roles are practiced in Somalia. In this episode of classroom talk, I instructed the students to write a short essay on the topic of gender equality. After about 10 minutes of writing, Safiyo introduced the topic of a female Somali who wanted to stand for elections as the President of Somalia:

This girl, she’s like, you know Fadumo Dayib³⁸, she wants to become the Somali president
[Classroom recording 29/03/14]

³⁸ Fadumo Dayib was a female Somali asylum seeker in Finland who returned to Somalia and stood as a female candidate for the 2016 Somali elections.

Asad did not rate this woman's chances of success highly as he retorted

That is not possible [Classroom recording 29/03/14]

In agreement with Asad, Abuubakar added:

No, her? Again in Somalia, that's not possible, you have to be elected, isn't it? And the majority do not want a female president [Classroom recording 29/03/14]

Nasra shared the boys' view and said

I think, no no no no way. Alright, she'd have the brains but Somalis don't want a female president [Classroom recording 29/03/14]

Nasra's words expressed her view that even a woman with the necessary intelligence to govern a country would not succeed in running for elections to govern Somalia. It was unclear why Asad, Abuubakar and Nasra declared that the majority of the people in Somalia would not be open to the idea of a female president. However, their words alluded to the practice of 'traditional' Somali gender ideals in which women were mostly excluded from political activities, including shir, the open councils where adult men debate important decisions and from which women were mostly excluded (Lewis 1994, Kleist 2010). Asad, Abuubakar and Nasra's words conveyed their view that Somali females' aspirations were restricted by the 'traditional' cultural practices of gendered vocations in Somalia. In the following example, a young Somali female teacher draws on the narrative of 'traditional' gendered roles in her evaluation of her students' misbehaviour in her class.

Episode 22

The following episode shows how the narrative of 'traditional' gendered roles was told by a female Somali teacher at the site. At the school, one of my tasks in my role as a senior member of staff was to supervise new teachers. During an observation session with Fouzia (female, 25 years old, Somali descent), I noticed that her Year 5 students did not pay attention to her instructions and begun talking amongst themselves. Despite her attempts to manage the students' behaviour, the noise level increased. As the site is a space sectioned into different classes by removable panels, Fouzia's noisy students

disrupted other sessions that were running simultaneously. Axmaadeey then peered over one of the panels and stared solemnly at the students. His action had an immediate calming effect on Fouzia's students. During a meeting with Fouzia after the session, I suggested some classroom management techniques to manage her students' behaviour. However, Fouzia thinks the students' behaviour is directly related to the respect traditionally accorded to male teachers:

Steve, I've taught in other schools with no problem. Somali kids will only respect male teachers, did you see how quickly they shut up when Axmaadeey looked at them, look, I'm the only female teacher here (Conversation 12/02/14).

In the above extract Fouzia expressed a view that is linked with the 'traditional' Somali narrative of gendered vocations. It was unclear but perhaps she was alluding to the respect afforded to male teachers in Islamic schools in Somalia (Cassanelli and Farah 2008). She tried to support her claim by making the observation that the research site has maintained the practice of gendered vocation because it was exclusively staffed by men. She used the trope of gendered occupational roles to explain her students' misbehaviour. In a sense, Fouzia produced a common-sense ideology that Somali women were traditionally excluded from the teaching profession. However, her account raised another issue, the majority of young SLS have been raised and educated in the UK. These young SLS have lived experiences of attending schools that are staffed by teachers of both genders. Perhaps her students' misbehaviour might be due to how Fouzia chose to present herself at the site. Unlike typical female schoolteachers in the UK who looked mature, projected a motherly image and conservatively dressed, Fouzia was a fashionista (details of her ways of dressing will be discussed in the next subsection) who did not wear the hijab, she looked like a young cosmopolitan who lives in a modern urban environment. Perhaps the respect that Fouzia craved from her students was in part attributed to her age and her appearance. Further, from my observation of her classroom practice, I would also argue that her students' behaviour might be a result of her lack of teaching experience. During the session, Fouzia was noticeably nervous and she did not provide clear instructions to her students.

In short, this subsection provided some of the ways that 'traditional' narratives on fixed gendered roles and practices were circulated at my research site. The examples provided

above suggests that some of my informants subscribe to the notion of clearly delineated traditional gender roles. However, the views in the examples above need to be contextualised as the first example discussed the topic of a female candidate running for the post of president in Somalia. In the second episode, Fouzia produced the discourse of gendered vocations as a way to apportion blame on traditional Somali gender relations for her inability to manage the behaviour of her students. The following subsection looks at the ways traditional fixed gendered roles were contested by my informants.

5.3.2. (b) Tensions arising from the discourse of ‘traditional’ gendered roles

The previous subsections provided examples of a consensus about the narratives of ‘traditional’ gendered occupations among my informants. However, it would be a mistake to assume that these gendered ideals were straightforwardly assumed by all members of SLS. The ensuing episode shows how perspectives on ‘traditional’ gendered occupations were contested by young female SLS. In this example, we’ll also see how Asad position himself as a ‘traditionalist’ in relation to gender relations. The second example shows some adult informants’ distress at their inability to impose ‘traditional’ gendered roles in South London.

Episode 23

This encounter shows how the discourse of gendered vocation in were contested among young SLS. In this speech event, the topic of ‘traditional’ gender ideals emerged after I instructed my students to write a letter to their Local Education Authority. Prior to the task, I checked the students’ understanding of the formal term of address to the recipient if the writer does not know the addressee’s name. This prompted Nasra to volunteer the appropriate term of salutation of ‘Dear Sir or Madam’. Nasra’s answer triggered Asad to propose:

You write dear Abdi or Mohamed if you’re writing to a Somali organisation [classroom recording 19/04/14]

Asad’s playful utterance reveals two aspects; one, that an overriding number of Somali males are named either Abdi and Mohamed and two, the unquestioning assumption that

the recipient of the letter was a male person. Intrigued, I asked Asad how he would address a female recipient in a formal letter. Asad looked at Safiyo with a smirk and said:

Somali women do not work at these places [classroom recording 19/04/14]

Abuubakar concurred with Asad's declaration and added:

Yeah, you don't find Somali women running these places [classroom recording 19/04/14]

Asad and Abuubakar's statements expressed their alignment with the discourse of Somali gendered roles. They tried to communicate the idea that Somali men are responsible for *all* public activities (Kleist 2010). However, this notion of gendered vocation did not sit well with Nasra:

No sir, that's rubbish, there are many Somali organizations run by women [classroom recording 19/04/14]

Nasra's declaration communicated her resistance to the narrative of 'traditional' gendered roles. She subscribes to the idea of gender equality in a modern society and argued that 'traditional' discourse on gendered vocation is not relevant in contemporary London.

This subsection revealed the tensions that emerged from the reproduction of the discourse of 'traditional' gendered roles in London. Asad and Abuubakar were aligned with the narrative that suggests Somali women should be excluded from certain roles, they attempted to 're-institute complementary gender ideals ... to naturalise the 'traditional' gender baseline' (Kleist 2010: 199-200). However, Nasra's contestation communicates her view that in a modern society, Somali women are not socially restricted from achieving their aspirations. She rejected Asad and Abuubakar's formalised notion of a Somali community that continues to draw uniformly on 'traditional' gender divisions. In the following episode, it appears that adult SLS yearn for traditional gender division with regard to domestic duties in South London.

Episode 24

In addition to the discourse of gendered roles, this episode shows how some adult male SLS circulate the narrative of gender division of domestic duties. In this episode, the teachers and I were having a coffee at the school after the students had left. Mohamed looked at the mess that the students left behind with disgust and remarked:

This is terrible. If this is Somalia, the place would be spotless! The girls clean everything up, here, hah, they don't do anything here (Field notes 29/09/13)

Mohamed's lament communicated his attachment to the idea that domestic duties are the sole preserve of Somali women. Even though the mess at the school was created by young SLS of both genders, Mohamed seemed to expect the female participants to tidy up the classroom. Further, Mohamed's use of 'they' in referring to Somali females in London indicated his disapproval with their non-compliance with the narratives of 'traditional' gendered roles in South London. In agreement with Mohamed, Axmaadeey added:

Yes, you know I didn't have to clean at home, my sisters and mother took care of everything but here it's different, my daughters don't do it, they want to play their video games. (Field notes 29/09/13)

Axmaadeey's telling of the narrative of gendered duties reflects his claim about 'traditional' gendered roles. In his family, his mother and sisters performed domestic duties. The conditions of contemporary London life seemed to cause some strain for people like Axmaadeey and Mohamed. They cope by telling narratives to hold to an idea that there is an authentic Somali ethnicity with regard to gender relations. As indicated in chapter 4, Mohamed and Axmaadeey did not have significant lived experiences in Somalia but their narratives suggest a yearning to continue the practice of gendered roles in London. However, the examples in this subsection have shown the tensions and difficulties that adult SLS males have encountered when they tried to impose the 'traditional' narratives of gendered domestic duties in modernity.

To sum up, subsections 5.3.1-5.3.2 revealed some examples of how gender relations among SLS might be understood by the compliance and emerging tensions from the reproduction of a set 'traditional' gender discourses. For Mohamed, he seemed to think that the notion that Somali ethnic purity could be preserved but he demonstrated partial

acceptance that this construct might be difficult to maintain in modernity. However, his partial acceptance is limited to Somali males and he communicated a desire to police Somali females from marrying people of non-Somali ethnicity. This subsection has also shown how some young SLS males attempted to reproduce some narratives of traditional gender ideals but encounter challenges from young SLS females' competing views. In short, the preceding subsections have provided examples of how Somali gender relations should be understood as the resultant effects of the compliance and tensions emanating from the reproduction of the stories of 'traditional' gender relations in modernity.

5.3.3 The practices and discourses of modes of dress

Subsections 5.3.1-5.3.2 provided some of the ways that the subject of 'traditional' Somali gender relations was circulated, enacted and contested by my focus-group informants. As section 5.2 has highlighted, SLS explicitly accept Islam as a part of their identity. This subsection shows how some SLS' Muslim identities were visibly indexed by their attire. This section first provides a commentary on the SLS' ways of dressing as illustrated by images in the following subsections below. Following the discussion of the immediate visual impact provided by the images, it also offers some examples of instances of the tensions that emerge from the narratives of modes of dress.

5.3.3 (a) SLS boys' modes of dress



Figure 12: SLS boys' ways of dressing

In this photograph, the group of students comprises 11 boys and 3 girls (one partly hidden in the background) ranging from 6 to 14 years old. As shown in the image above, the boys kept close cropped hairstyles, wore hoodies or T shirts under puffy jackets or windbreakers over jeans. At first sight, the boys' form of dress were redolent of typical London teenagers. Their clothes do not provide any indication of their attachment to Islam and the photograph above suggests that SLS boys were orientated to contemporary fashion.

5.3.3 (b) SLS girls' modes of dress



Figure 13: SLS girls' modes of dress

Figure 13 above consists of students between the age of 6 and 16 years old in addition to two adult male members of staff. In this subsection, I focus on the girls' attire. In figure 2, the younger girls are positioned at the front with the older and taller students in the background. The image above is a representation of the typical ways of dressing among SLS girls at the research site. As the image shows, the SLS girls at the research site typically wore *hijabs*³⁹ by default. However, there were subtle differences in the ways the girls chose to adorn themselves. Among the girls in the front row, the first girl on in the far left wore track suit bottoms with a brightly coloured long-sleeved shirt, matching jacket and modern trainers. The girl (no. 2) to her immediate right wore a more ethnically marked outfit consisting of a cardigan over a knee length garment over a pair of jeans and black shoes. The next girl (no 3) on her right wore another version of an ethnically marked

³⁹ A hijab is a veil that covers the head and chest, which is sometimes worn by some Muslim women beyond the age of puberty in the presence of adult males outside of their immediate family as a form of modest attire (Ali 2001)

outfit consisting of a long brown loose garment and a bright pink jacket. The next girl (no 4) wore a long-sleeved shirt over a short dress over colourful tights and black modern trainers. The fifth and sixth girls' outfits in the front row were somewhat similar with the third girl's outfit. Finally, the seventh girl in the front row wore an outfit similar with the third girl in the photo. However, the sixth girl wore trainers instead of 'normal girl shoes' worn by girls no 5 and no 7. These observations suggest that while all the SLS girls visibly mark their Muslim identity by wearing the hijab, some of their attire had been inflected by aspects of modern fashion. In addition, figure 13 suggests that as a group, there were certain items that were obligatory for the girls to wear as compared with the boys (Figure 12). This subsection suggests that as a group, young female SLS comply with certain ways of dressing that were informed by Islamic principles. The following subsection explores some of the observed ways of dressing among my adult male informants during my fieldwork.

5.3.3 (c) Modes of dress among adult male SLS

Over the course of fieldwork, I noticed that some male SLS adults indicate their religious allegiance to Islam by certain ways of dressing. For example, as pointed out in chapter 4, Axmaadeey's regular attire at the site consists of a long white tunic and a rounded skullcap. His attire signals his compliance with a strand of Islamic principles⁴⁰ which encourage Muslim men to 'wear white clothes, because they are the cleanest, and the most agreeable' (Hughes 1994: 92). I have also observed another three male SLS adults at the site who routinely dress like Axmaadeey. These men regularly join Axmaadeey and Mohamed for afternoon prayers at the site. However, Axmaadeey's way of dressing was not indicative of all male SLS at my site. Mohamed for example, alternated between wearing dark tunics and clothes that are typically worn by office workers in London such as smartly pressed trousers, long sleeved shirts and shiny leather shoes. Farhan on the other hand, makes subtle references to his Muslim identity by wearing a rounded skullcap like Axmaadeey. But like Mohamed, he routinely wore smartly pressed shirts and dark suits. In fact, Farhan's typical way of dressing was indicative of most adult SLS males' attire at the site. This subsection suggests that as a group, SLS males were not constrained

⁴⁰ The issue of wearing white might stem from elements of Saudi culture rooted in a Hanabali/Salafi understanding of Islam

by a particular way of dressing. While a small section of SLS males chose to index their Muslim identity by dressing in certain ways, the majority of the male participants at the school projected a cosmopolitan identity.

5.3.3 (d) Modes of dress among adult female SLS

At the research site, female members of SLS routinely index their Muslim identities by their ways of dressing. Among adult female SLS, their typical attire at the school consists of wearing the hijab over black or dark coloured long loose garments that cover the entire body apart from the hands and face. However, a closer observation of the ways some adult female SLS dress reveals some of the ways their attire was inflected by contemporary fashion trends. This group of female SLS likes to showcase expensive designer handbags and shoes when they send or pick up their children at the school. In a way, this group of women communicated individualised, cosmopolitan ‘Islamic fashion’ (Tarlo 2010) in how they choose to dress. In short, the majority of female SLS as a group, dress in ways that indicate their Muslim identity but also, as individuals, project their orientation to certain fashion items such as the adornment of designer accessories.

5.3.4 Tensions from non-compliance with Islamic dress code

From the visual evidence provided by the photographs, and my observations of SLS ways of dressing at my research site, all the female SLS participants typically wear the hijab while only a small minority of the men and the boys dress in ways that are indicative of their religious affiliation with Islam. In this subsection, I show examples of the tensions that emerged from the non-compliance with the narratives and practices of how Somali females were expected to dress.

Episode 25

As I have shown in the preceding subsections, there seemed to be an unspoken code of conduct regarding how female SLS should dress at the site. The following example shows the tensions that emerged when a female teacher of Somali descent did not conform to what is considered to be an ‘appropriate’ way of dressing for female participants at the school. In this encounter, I was tasked with observing Fouzia, a female Somali trainee

teacher in her 20s. Fouzia is a confident and highly educated young female with a postgraduate degree who had volunteered her services at the school to gain some teaching experience. In this particular occasion, she did not wear a hijab and shows her closely cropped hair with bold blond streaks on one side of her head. She also wore bright facial cosmetics and large round, gold earrings together with a pair of tight fitting jeans and a brightly coloured loose-fitting top. Fouzia's appearance appear to have instigated one of her students to question her ethnic and religious background:

Female student: Are you Somali, ma'am?

Fouzia: Yes I am

Female student: Why don't you cover your hair Ma'am? Aren't you Muslim?

[Field notes 23/11/13]

The teacher appeared to be stunned by this line of interrogation and did not offer a response before continuing to deliver her lesson. In the example above, the student's questions imply that Somali ethnicity is tightly intertwined with their religious affiliation to Islam and that wearing the hijab is an obligation for female Muslims. The student's line of questioning also implied that among Somali females in the UK, wearing the hijab is viewed as 'unquestionably the 'right thing to do' and was a marker of a 'good Somali woman' (Liberatore 2013: 106). In this sense, these types of clothes which signify their Muslim identity was also congruent with certain strands of Islamic moral values that Somali women should uphold⁴¹. From this perspective, Fouzia's choice to dress and adorn herself with elements of modern fashion and by not covering her hair, was viewed as an act of transgression by her student. Some of these tensions about traditional dress in contemporary urban contexts were also discovered in Liberatore's (2013) study. Her informant, Ifrah, argues that the policing of Somali females' mode of dress stem from the absorption of a set of discourses about external practices which are circulated by first

⁴¹ However, Ahmed (1999) argues that this emphasis in Somali women's dress was directly linked to censorship of women's behaviour as extreme versions of Islamic interpretation became widespread in Somalia. This came about in opposition to the dictatorship set up by Siad Barre through a rebel movement, known as the Muslim Brethren (Al-ikhwan almuslimum), which promoted Islamic values (Ahmed 1999). This movement penetrated Somali towns during the late 1970s and early 1980s and resulted in a new conservatism, which challenged freedom of movement, association and dress (Ahmed 1999). This strict policing of women's sexuality and position in society is, therefore legitimised as necessary restitution for the souls of the entire community, thereby, providing justification for the practice of covering for all women.

generation women within the Somali community (Liberatore 2013: 106). According to Ifrah,

generally it's constantly about being seen by the Somali community. That's what matters. There's constant talk amongst women 'did you see so and so wearing this, and so and so what she was wearing?... For older women, ensuring their daughters are visibly moral serves to enhance their own moral integrity' (Liberatore ibid).

In this light, the student's utterances in episode 25 suggests that she subscribes to the idea that the hijab serves as a visible marker of a woman's moral integrity and in her view, Fouzia's way of dressing was an act of transgression. The next episode is an example of the discourse of how women should preserve their modesty was reproduced by a SLS boy.

Episode 26

This episode reveals how a narrative on ways of dressing for women was told by a young male informant. During my observation of Mohamed's year 8 English lesson, a boy appeared to be distressed when he saw an image of a fair skinned woman dressed in a revealing bikini in the teaching material.

Boy: (pointed at the picture) she should cover up

Mohamed: She's not Muslim, she can wear that

Boy: Yeah but women shouldn't wear that

(Field notes 12/04/14)

For this boy, the bikini clad woman is incompatible with his alignment with certain Islamic principles. To him, the woman in the picture has transgressed, she did not conform to a world view that is contoured by a certain strand of Islamic teachings. Interestingly, even though Mohamed responded by saying that non-Muslim women are not restricted by certain forms of dressing, the boy maintained that the rule should be applied to ALL women. Further, this encounter suggests that other young SLS in this class might subscribe to the worldview in which all women should modestly as the protagonist's utterance was not challenged.

Section 5.3 has shown how gender relations among SLS should be understood as the relationship between varying degrees of compliance with and transgressions against a set of practices and moral stories that are mostly informed by Islamic principles. It shows how some SLS' forms of dress marked their Muslim identity. The preceding has also argued that male SLS' could *choose* to identify as Muslims (or not) in their modes of dress. However, the overwhelming majority of female SLS routinely dressed in ways that indexed their identity as Muslims. I have also shown the tensions that emerge during an instance when this unspoken dress code was not observed.

Conclusion

This chapter has offered examples of the ways in which SLS practice and tell the narratives of 'traditional' Somali cultural practices of (i) maintaining kinship ties, clan connections and the role of elders, (ii), rituals and discourses that signify their religious allegiance to Islam (iii) traditional gender relations and (iv) ways of dressing. These are details that have not been emphasised with sufficient precision in the research literature. The chapter has argued that SLS as a group, freely identified with their kinship and clan connections but young SLS exhibited fragments of knowledge about this aspect of Somali tradition. Unremarkably, the role of elders within the SLS community has also been diminished in a modern, urban context. In London, SLS elders in the main, do not enjoy the authority and respect accorded to them in their homeland. This chapter has also revealed that while all SLS willingly self-identify as Muslims, there were in fact varying degrees of compliance with certain Islamic principles among individual members. I have also shown some of the observed tensions emanating from certain individuals' part or non-compliance with a range of Muslim rituals. Section 3 has shown how narratives of 'traditional' gender relations were told and at times, contested. As I have also shown, Farhan and Asad were committed to certain 'traditional' ethnic particularities such as fixed gendered roles but exhibited a blasé attitude towards Muslim rituals. It has also revealed that as a group, female SLS index their Muslim identity by their ways of dressing but male members of SLS were not obliged to do so. The data also suggests some members of SLS might be undergoing a shift in orientation to the conditions of life in modernity. Whether they like it or not, as a group, SLS are British people who have to comply with nation state bureaucracy such as filling out forms that must include their surnames, and they are legally obliged to send their children of both genders to schools.

Perhaps the accumulation of SLS' lived experiences has created a slight detachment from a universal, all-encompassing set of 'traditional' narratives and cultural practices perceived to be authentic Somali ethnicity. To summarise, this chapter has argued that the nature of Somali ethnicity is not one dimensional and rooted in 'traditional' practices imported from the homeland and 'unpacked' in London. On the contrary, it suggests that Somali ethnicities are somehow enacted by the interaction between the discourses and practices of what my informants viewed to be authentic Somali 'traditions' in a modern, relatively secular and superdiverse urban context. And in the process certain tensions, strains and ambiguities about what might constitute Somali ethnicity have emerged.

Chapter 6: Rooted communicative habits as markers of Somali ethnicities

Introduction

This chapter shows how the nature of Somali ethnicities in the UK might be understood from an analysis of the rooted communicative habits among a group of South Londoners of Somali (SLS) descent. As I have shown in chapter one, the research literature's unsophisticated treatment of language use among Somalis in the UK has posited a binary Somali – English language dichotomy between the adults and young Somalis in the UK. In this dichotomy, adult Somalis in the UK are construed to be so wedded to Somali language with limited knowledge in English that it has caused a host of problems (see chapter one). However, in my research, there was little evidence of sustained Somali language use among the participants. This chapter does not argue against the significance of Somali language for my informants, but it provides an ethnographic account of the ways a set of ethnic particularities were signalled by SLS' small but significant communicative habits. It draws attention to my observations of the routine social practices mediated by natural talk rather than reporting my informants' self-declarations of their language proficiencies. It argues that a close attention to the unthinking, ritualised communicative habits show how a collective SLS identity was cemented. The sections in this chapter reveal how unconscious communicative habits convey certain aspects of their social status. Further, this set of communicative habits also show my informants' alignment with particular traditional cultural practices and religious attachments to Islam. As such, this chapter is concerned with the minute but significant low-key markers of Somali ethnicities that emerge in the routine talk at my research site. This collective communicative behaviour is tantamount to what Goffman (1981) terms ritualised acts:

The movements, looks, and vocal sounds we make as an unintended by-product of speaking and listening never seem to remain innocent. Within the lifetime of each of us these acts in varying degrees acquire a specialized communicative role in the stream of our behavior, looked to and provided for in connection with the displaying of our alignment to current events. We look simply to see, see others looking, see we are seen looking, and soon become knowing and skilled in regard to the evidential uses made of the appearance of looking. We clear our throat, we pause to think, we turn attention to a next doing, and soon we specialize these acts, performing them with no felt contrivance right where others in our gestural community would also, and like them, we do so apart (Goffman 1981: 2)

Informed by Goffman's articulations above, the following sections investigate the ways in which Somali ethnicities were signalled by the ritualised communicative habits that were observed at my research site. To this end, the chapter firstly draws attention to some typical communicative behaviour, analyses the situational contexts that shape the communicative habits, and observes the role of some of the rules of etiquette in coordinating social interaction. There are three important situational contexts to note, (a) interaction among adult SLS, (b) interaction between adult and young SLS and (c) interaction among young SLS. From my observations at the site, interactions between adult SLS were predominantly conducted in a blend of English, Somali and Arabic linguistic codes. Due to young SLS' limited proficiency in Somali language, interactions between the teachers and the students were overwhelmingly conducted in English. However, Somali language is not an insignificant marker of SLS ethnicities as it emerges in particular ways such as during the situated events of greeting and leave taking rituals. Second, this chapter argues that Somali ethnicities were also indexed by certain small expressive interjections in Somali and Arabic to communicate praise, displeasure and to sanction transgressive behaviour during class time. Most young SLS did not exhibit a deep understanding of Somali or Arabic but they comprehend the teachers' messages by responding in ways that were expected of them. Further, as the following sections argue, the linguistic means that are deployed by SLS are organised to serve specific communicative ends. In short, the focus of this chapter is on the communicative behaviours that I argue might index SLS identities.

6.1 Greeting and leave taking rituals

This section investigates the little markers of Somali ethnicity that emerge from SLS' small talk during the rituals of greetings and leave takings at my research site. As the following subsections note, particular types of greeting expressions require appropriate responses during these encounters. Further, the ways that SLS greetings were initiated shaped the leave-taking expressions. As the following subsections show, typical greeting and leave taking rituals communicate muted but important encoded messages that mark SLS group membership and the interactants' social distance. As Firth (1972) argued, greetings are 'a system of signs that convey other than overt messages' (Firth 1972: 30). In advance of this chapter's interpretive analysis of some of the observed SLS' greeting

rituals, the upcoming subsection provides the reader with a sketch of the typical scenes at the school during Saturday mornings.

6.1.1 Setting the scene – typical Saturday mornings at the site

Due to the permanently broken intercom which controls access to the building, the participants at the research site were aware that during term time, the doors were open from 9.00 am to 9.30 am and from 12 pm to 12.30 pm on Saturdays for their ease of entry and exit. The Year 3 to Year 5 students attend the morning sessions whilst the afternoon sessions are for students in Year 6 to Year 11. The Year 3 to Year 5 students begin to trickle in at about 9.10 am but most of them arrive between 9.25 to 9.30 am. The Year 6 to Year 11 students attend the afternoon sessions that run from 1.30 pm to 5.30 pm. Typically, the parents would walk into the school with their child/children and initiate the ritual of greetings with one of the teachers. These parents/carers would then sign the attendance register. Once this required action has been performed, parents would typically kiss and hug their children before letting one of the teachers direct the students to their seat. In general, greeting exchanges between the teachers and SLS parents on Saturday mornings were brief encounters. The teachers were usually busy with pre-lesson duties such as making copies of the teaching materials. In addition, due to the unpredictable number of students that attend the classes, teachers have to organise the tables and chairs after the headcount of students in their specific age groups. At the conclusion of the morning classes, the parents of Year 3 to Year 5 students arrive at 12.30 pm to pick them up. In most cases, the parents wait for their children in their parked cars outside the school and the only exceptions to this observation are during instances in which Mohamed or Axmaadeey summons a parent for a conversation.

Outside of the open access times listed above, SLS would typically walk around the side of the building and knock on the window before shouting in Somali, '*Maacalin*⁴²' (teacher)! One of the teachers would respond in Somali by uttering '*So wereeg!*' (Come round)'. During these arrival rituals, the noun '*Maacalin*' functions as (i) term of address

⁴² Teacher, educator, male instructor, professor, *a respectful term* (Horst (2008), Awde and Orwin (1999), Qoorsheel (2007))

and (ii) communicates a request to gain access to the premises. The response ‘*so wereeg*’ confirms to the speaker that access is granted and at the same time, directs the participants to wait at the entrance. If the person who requires access is a student, one of the older boys would be dispatched to unlock the heavy red door at the entrance of the building. If a parent or an important visitor is expected, Mohamed or Axmaadeey would personally greet them at the door. During occasions in which visitors to the school or the parents of potential students require entry, Mohamed would instruct them in advance of the visit to call his mobile phone upon arrival. SLS insiders are aware that only uninvited outsiders would attempt to gain entry by pressing the buzzer on the broken intercom or to knock on the door. Although these arrival rituals are conducted only in fragments of Somali language, the ability to perform them are important. Firstly, the utterance ‘*maacalin*’ provides immediate access to the school in addition to indexing the particular individual’s group membership. These little verbalizations in Somali language are minute but important markers of an individual’s group membership at the school. For example, if a person knocks on the window and utters a typical Somali greeting, the participants at the school would anticipate a *visitor* of Somali ethnicity.

In the preceding, I provided the context in which participants at the supplementary school perform their greeting rituals. The typically busy scenario in which teachers juggled multiple tasks and parents jostled to queue and sign the attendance register were part of the context that shaped the typically brief greeting routines. I have also shown how the faulty intercom at the research site created a particular communicative habit in order to gain access into the school. In the following subsections, I highlight the different ways in which routine greetings among parents/carers and the teachers are performed. SLS’ access rituals in the following are communicated in multiple codes but the social conduct between the participants are the important markers of one’s status within the group. Subsection 6.1.2 is organized around the situational contexts of talk (i) among adult SLS, (ii) talk between adult and young SLS and (iii) among young SLS.

6.1.2 (a) Greeting rituals in Somali between parents and teachers

At the school, the situated events of greetings between the parents and teachers were mostly conducted in fragments of Somali language. However, the ways that these

ritualised acts are performed warrant a closer look. The following episodes offer typical ways in which these situated events were enacted:

Episode 1

Axmaadeey was making photocopies behind the receptionist's desk and a Year 9 student's father walked towards him and uttered in Somali '*Setahay Maacalin?*' (how are you, teacher). Axmaadeey looked up and responded in Somali by muttering '*Fiican*' (well/fine) before focusing on stacking and stapling his handouts for the session. The man waved and walked out. [field notes 17/01/14]

Episode 2

During the lunch break, Naciimo's father entered the room and upon noticing Mohamed behind the computer, walked towards him and uttered '*Setahay Maacalin?*' (how are you, teacher). Mohamed remained seated, smiled, shook the man's hand and uttered '*Fiican, Fiican*' (fine, fine) and continued their conversation in English. After several moments, Mohamed stood up and concluded the conversation by patting the man's right shoulder before tending to the Year 5 students. Naciimo's father smiled and waved at Mohamed before he walked out of the room. [field notes 07/02/14]

Episode 3

Daud's mother arrived at the school earlier than usual and upon seeing Mohamed at the far corner of the room, walked towards him and said '*Setahay Maacalin?*'. Mohamed smiled and said '*Setahay*' before engaging in a conversation with her. As the students started to arrive, Mohamed concluded the conversation by uttering '*Nabadeey*' (Good bye) before he turned around to ensure that other parents remember to sign the attendance register. [field notes 06/09/13]

In the situated events of greetings above, the parents gravitated towards the teachers and initiated the exchanges. By using Somali in their first turn, these parents firstly communicated an identity that foregrounds a '*Somali*' social category membership. In the three extracts above, the parents' use of the informal Somali greeting '*setahay*', a contraction of '*sideed tahay*' (how are you) (Kariye 1999: 3) was also suggestive of the nature of the informal and close relationships between the teachers and the parents. Greetings in episodes 1-3 were initiated by the parents with a formulaic utterance '*setahay*' (how are you), which served to inquire the respondents' wellbeing. The initial greetings were followed by the honorific Somali term of address '*Maacalin*' (teacher). The typical response to these greeting utterances is the response in Somali language '*Fiican*' (fine). In addition, although the formulaic Somali greeting phrase '*setahay*' is uttered to enquire the respondent's wellbeing, SLS group members are aware that a lengthy narrative of

their state of being is not expected but instead, utter the nominal formulaic phrase '*fii can* (fine)' as a ritual response. By uttering these formulaic greeting and response phrases, adult SLS provide indexical information about their Somali ethnicity by communicating greetings in Somali language at the research site.

However, the ways that these greeting rituals were enacted merit further attention. In episodes 1-3 above, greeting rituals conveyed the parents' natural and unforced deference⁴³ to the teachers by the enactment of little moves such as walking towards the teachers and by inserting a respectful term of address in their utterances of greeting. The demeanour that Mohamed and Axmaadeey exhibited during the episodes above suggest that they were accustomed to receiving these little acts of deference from the parents. For example, in extract one, Axmaadeey made an effort to acknowledge the greeter's presence but he continued to attend to his pre- lesson duties. In extract 2, Mohamed remained seated even though Naciimo's father approached to shake his hand. In extract 3, Daud's mother had to approach Mohamed at the far corner of the room to greet him. While Mohamed acknowledged her presence, by terminating the encounter after a few exchanges, he appeared to be more concerned with making sure other parents signed the attendance register. It is also significant that in the extracts above, the teachers appear to reserve the right to terminate these exchanges by uttering the informal '*nabadeey*' (bye) instead of the formal '*nabad gelyo*' (goodbye) (Awde et al 1999: 42). Further, the teacher's habit of making physical contact with the male parents to communicate the closing of the verbal exchanges exhibited an asymmetrical rule of social conduct. However, as extract 3 demonstrates, female participants and the male teachers' greeting rituals do not typically involve physical contact. In the typical greeting routines illustrated by the episodes above, the teachers' demeanour indicates their asymmetrical relationships with the parents by the ways that their communicative behaviour was structured. Crucially, the small linguistic tokens such as the co-occurrence of '*setahay macaalin*' were important signals of Somali ethnicity at the site. The upcoming subsection shows how greeting rituals between Somali elders and the teachers were enacted.

⁴³ Goffman (1967: 56) defines deference as activity "by which appreciation is regularly conveyed" to one person from another person.

6.1.2 (b) Somali greetings rituals between SLS elders and the teachers

In addition to the parents/carers, some students at the school are regularly accompanied by their grandparents on Saturday mornings. The episodes below suggest that the ways that these exchanges were enacted highlight the elders' privileged social status within the group.

Episode 4

At 9.40 am, a man in his 60s walked into the reception area with his granddaughter and as it was a busy morning, a queue of parents was lined up to sign the attendance register. As soon as Axmaadeey noticed this person, he walked across the room, took the register from the desk and approached the man. Bowing slightly, Axmaadeey shook the man's hand and said '*setahay adeer*⁴⁴' (How, uncle) before handing him the pen to sign the register. The man shook Axmaadeey's proffered hand and said in Somali, '*Fiican, macallin*' (Fine, teacher), signed the register and continued the conversation. [field notes 12/10/13]

Episode 5

Ibrahim's grandmother arrived at the school to pick him up as usual and upon seeing her, Mohamed got up from his chair and said, '*setahay eeddo*' (How, auntie). The woman responded by saying '*maacallin, waan fiican*' (teacher, I'm well/fine) before she took her purse out and counted out some money to pay her grandchild's tuition fees. [field notes 08/02/14]

In contrast with 6.1.2 (a), episodes 4 and 5 showed how Mohamed and Axmaadeey communicated their deference to SLS elders. Firstly, they made the non-verbal gesture of respect by rising from a seated position and by walking towards Somali elders before initiating their greeting ritual. In episode 4, Axmaadeey made the physical effort of moving towards the queue of parents to provide privileged access for the elderly man to sign the register. By bowing and offering to shake the man's hand, Axmaadeey exhibits his deference to the elderly man. In episode 5, Mohamed immediately stood up to greet Ibrahim's grandmother. Further, in extracts 4 and 5, verbal salutations in Somali included the kinship term of address '*adeer/ eeddo*'. According to Lewis (1994: 84), '*adeer*' is a formal kinship term for paternal uncle and '*eeddo*' is the term for paternal auntie in North Somalia and he also observed that these kinship terms were also employed as a polite

⁴⁴ . Adeer [paternal uncle – father's brother; husband of father's sister; stepfather; respectful form of address to a man]; Eeddo-da [aunt – father's sister; stepmother; respectful form of address to a woman] (Kapchits and Porkhomovsky 2008 : 142, 144)

form of address. Although the teachers might not be related to these Somali elders, the insertion of a kinship term of address signified their respect for the participants and the maintenance of traditional Somali rules of etiquette (Kapchits & Porkhomovsky 2008) in this space. The usage of these low-key honorific terms of address by the teachers indexed SLS as a group of people who maintained a specific form of traditional cultural practices originating from Somaliland. These regular communicative habits of inserting honorific kinship terms and certain bodily movements show how deference to elders was unforced or unthinkingly performed. These ways of showing deference have also been noted in other ethnic communities but it shows how the retention of these ritualised acts as performances of deference was significant for adult SLS and that traces of an ethnic specificity from Somaliland is maintained. As the preceding subsections have shown, most adult SLS unconsciously transmit a set of communicative conduct that shapes and maintains the group's social hierarchy. The ways that SLS initiate and behave during greeting exchanges provide information about the interactants' social distance. As Goffman (1956) observes,

A symmetrical rule is one which leads an individual to have obligations or expectations regarding others that these others have in regard to him.... What we call common courtesies and rules of public order tend to be symmetrical, ...An asymmetrical rule is one that leads others to treat and be treated by an individual differently from the way he treats and is treated by them' (Goffman 1956: 476).

The ensuing subsection shows how some adult participants at my research site routinely use Arabic greeting expressions in their talk.

6.1.3 SLS adult to adult greetings in Arabic

This subsection shows some of the ways a section of adult SLS regularly communicated their greetings in Arabic. While the following examples demonstrate their shared identities as Muslims, there were subtle ways in which deference was accorded.

Episode 6:

This episode shows how deference was shown by Asad's father in his greeting ritual with Axmaadeey. Prior to the following encounter, I was standing in a queue behind

Axmaadeey to use the photocopier. Asad's father entered the room, walked towards Axmaadeey with a bag of samosas and said,

'ASALAAM ALECHUM, *Maacalin*' (Peace be upon you, teacher). Axmaadeey looked up, grabbed the bag and said **'WA'ALAYKUMU S-SALĀM'** (And upon you, peace) as he laughs before shaking the man's hand. Asad's father laughed and took a samosa for himself before Axmaadeey passed the bag around the members of staff. [field notes 08/03/14]

Episode 6 provided evidence of the close relationship between Axmaadeey and Asad's father as demonstrated by the playful manner in which the greeting ritual was performed. However, there are some important aspects of this typical communicative behaviour to note. Firstly, Asad's father initiated the Arabic greeting **'ASALAAM ALECHUM'** (peace be upon you) which is quintessentially an Islamic mode of address as revealed by this verse in the Quran: 'When those come to thee, who believe in our signs, say **'ASALAAM ALECHUM'** (peace be upon you) (Surah VI in Caton 1986: 294). Thus, the use of this greeting formula by Asad's father indexes both himself and Axmaadeey as members of the universal community of Muslims. However, the inclusion of the Somali term of address **'*macallin*'** also identifies Axmaadeey as a male teacher and respected member of SLS. Axmaadeey's utterance of the formulaic response **'WA'ALAYKUMU S-SALĀM'** (And upon you, peace) signals his acceptance of the indexical information embedded in the speaker's greeting. In episode 6, Axmaadeey and Asad's father's greeting rituals index their shared religious allegiance to Islam but it also shows the nature of their asymmetrical relationship. Asad's father had to initiate the greeting even though he arrived bearing treats for the members of staff. The following episode is an example of how deference to a respected participant was exhibited by Mohamed's response to his greeting.

Episode 7:

This episode shows how deference was communicated by Mohamed in his response to his friend's greeting in Arabic during my observation of his Year 9 English session.

Mohamed was teaching English to Year 9 students in a partitioned area at the corner of the room. A man in his 40s walked in and in a loud voice, said

‘**ASALAAM ALECHUM**, *Maacalin*’ towards the direction of Mohamed. Visibly happy to see this person, Mohamed smiled and said, ‘**WA ALAYKUM ISSALAM WARAHMATU LLAHI WABARAKATUH**’ (And be it on you and God’s mercy and His blessings). Mohamed walked towards this person and shook his hand. [field notes 25/01/14]

In episode 7, this particular member of SLS deployed the conventional Arabic greeting expression ‘**ASALAAM ALECHUM**’ with the Somali term of address ‘*maacallin*’ in his greeting to Mohamed. Instead of the routine response of ‘**WA ALAYKUMU S-SALAM**’ as shown in episode 6, Mohamed regularly respond with ‘**WA ALAYKUM ISSALAM WARAHMATU LLAHI WABARAKATUH**’ (And be it on you and God’s mercy and His blessings) to this particular man. Mohamed’s response is an act of deference to this particular person, perhaps due to his status as a religious leader among SLS. This person has been observed to initiate **DUHR**⁴⁵ prayers whenever he visits the site. Mohamed’s response has a particular socio-religious significance; the lengthy honorific response reflects his observance of the Quranic injunction:

If you are greeted courteously, then greet with a better one, or at least return it in kind, God takes into account of all things’ (Surah IV in Caton 1986: 295).

El-Hassan (1991) also noted that ‘the interlocutors who respond with this extended version of the greeting (**WA ALAYKUM ISSALAM WARAHMATU LLAHI WABARAKATUH**) are being sensitive to the [Surah IV] injunction’ (El-Hassan 1991: 35). Mohamed’s extended responses in Arabic to this respected member of SLS were demonstrations of his adherence to greeting rituals informed by the teachings of Islam. In addition, Mohamed routinely exhibited deference to this SLS member by approaching this person and by making visible efforts to accommodate his presence by conducting extended conversations. This behaviour indicated an asymmetrical relationship between the man and Mohamed.

⁴⁵ Performed daily by practicing Muslims, it is the second of the five daily prayers (El-Hassan 1991).

Episodes 6 and 7 suggest that a section of SLS signify their religious identities in their greeting rituals and standard responses of 'WA'ALAYKUMU S-SALĀM' were regularly deployed. However, honorific Arabic responses to respected members of SLS were reciprocated with the extended version or '*better one*' (Surah IV in Caton 1986: *ibid*) to call for more blessings to be delivered to the addressor. These little greeting rituals in Arabic communicated the socio religious status of individual SLS group members. This subsection has also shown how one rendering of Somali ethnicities is marked by Arabic expressions in London. In some instances, no Somali language was used and in other instances, my informants use hybrid language practices such the insertion of a Somali term of address in conjunction with formulaic Arabic greeting forms.

6.1.4. SLS adult to adult greetings in English

The preceding subsections have shown how my informants' performance of access rituals in fragments of Somali and Arabic languages function as muted indicators of SLS ethnicity. The following episode typifies the routine greeting exchanges that were conducted by the use of formal English expressions. Although this greeting behaviour is indicative of only one individual SLS, it is of significance and requires a close look.

Episode 8

A group of five students stood around Axmaadeey to receive their marked work. Safiyo's father walked into the room and said, 'How are you, *macallin*?'. Axmaadeey immediately gave the stack of marked homework to one of the students to distribute and responded with, 'I'm well, sir. How are you? How's the family?' as he made his way towards this person. They shook hands and continued the conversation in mostly English. [Field notes 07/09/13]

In the above, Safiyo's father started the access rituals by uttering the formal English greeting expression 'How are you' with the inclusion of the Somali term of address '*maacallin*'. By using a formal English greeting expression in the first turn, the initiator of the speaking event indexed his social class background as a UK educated doctor. In his response, Axmaadeey produced the formal English response of 'I'm well' but of importance is his inclusion of the honorific term of address 'sir'. In contrast to the typically fleeting greeting exchanges with most parents, Axmaadeey extends the conversation by enquiring about the speaker's health and wellbeing of his family. Further,

Mohamed and Axmaadeey routinely accommodate this individual's presence by suspending or terminating ongoing conversations with other parents. The conduct of greeting rituals between Safiyo's father and the teachers signals an asymmetrical relationship. Although Safiyo's father regularly initiates the greeting sequences, Axmaadeey and Mohamed chose to respond to him in a deferential manner. In short, the interactions between Safiyo's father and SLS teachers were suggestive of their alignment with British notions of class ideals. In fact, their ways of greeting rituals in formal English might be indicative of the typical ways a white British person might conduct him/herself during a consultation with a doctor or a specialist medical consultant. These ways of greetings suggest that even though adult SLS regularly exhort the importance of maintaining Somali language use among the young, Axmaadeey and Mohamed's ways of talking with Safiyo's father suggest that they are not impermeable to the effects of their lived experiences in the UK in which English is the dominant language. In this way, the nature of Somali ethnicities has also been inflected by social class-structured greetings regularly seen in English cultural contexts in the UK.

As subsections 6.1.1-6.1.4 show, the communicative habit of greetings among SLS adults are communicated in multiple verbal and non-verbal codes in the supplementary school's linguistic ecology. The rules of conduct for these rituals are not structured by the linguistic code in operation but instead, are constrained by the social distance between the interactants. The initiator of the greetings typically occupies a lower social status than the recipient. Axmaadeey and Mohamed do not typically dispense titles or terms of address in their responses. The teachers' greetings to SLS elders and people of higher social standing were marked by specific non-verbal actions such as rising if one is seated, by initiating the greeting and by including a term of address that marks the recipient's status within the community. Thus, SLS' greeting forms communicate the respect of lower ranked members to individuals of higher status. The ability to comprehend and perform these communicative habits are vital for SLS group members. These greeting rituals perform an important social function for SLS, they structure the social relationships between the speaker and respondent. The obligation to perform deference to higher ranked members during repeated social intercourses enforces the SLS' group hierarchy. According to Goody (1972),

greeting is not simply empty form, it conveys respect of junior to senior, and it expresses subordinate/superordinate status relations... That is, the institutionalization of greeting ritual in such a way that its participants act out their respective and unequal statuses. And the combination of obligation to greet with institutionalized deference re-enforces this ranking effect (Goody 1972: 48-49).

In subsections 6.1.2 -6.1.4, greeting rituals were compounded of a set of linguistic convention and non-verbal behaviour as gestures of deference that has the effect of reinforcing the social status of the interactants. The convention of social conduct at the supplementary school were indicated by the little moves that communicate the nature of SLS ethnicities that were marked by an individual's attachments with Somali language, religion and the notion of social classes.

6.1.5 Greeting rituals between SLS teachers and students

As I have mentioned in 6.2.1 above, the research site is a bustling space on typical Saturday mornings. Due to the constant movement of people in a confined space before the start of the classes, it is not common for students to participate in lengthy greeting rituals with the teachers or staff members. Upon arrival, the students typically locate and sit with their classmates. However, as the following subsection shows, teachers used greetings rituals in creative ways to reprimand or sanction students who transgress the rules of social conduct at the site. Students are expected to arrive no later than ten minutes after the scheduled sessions begin.

6.1.5 (a) The use of Arabic greeting phrases during ritual interrogations

Extended greetings between adult and young SLS typically occurred during instances in which a student has breached a rule of conduct at the school. In the following episodes, Arabic greeting expressions were deployed by the teachers to reprimand transgressive acts by the students.

Episode 9

In the following episode of Mohamed's Year 9 English session, he used a typical Arabic greeting to flag up a student who had transgressed the rule of conduct at the school. During this particular encounter, I was seated behind the reception desk at 1.30 pm to organise my handouts for the afternoon session. Hamud, a Year 9 student walked in, looked at me and put a finger on his lips as he tried to sneak into class without attracting Mohamed's attention.

'ASALAAMU ALECHUM (peace be upon you), Hamud', Mohamed's voice boomed across the room. Hamud looked down sheepishly and said **'WA' ALECHUM S-SALĀM** (And upon you, peace), */Macallin'*. Mohamed waved the Hamud over and began to interrogate him about his reason for poor timekeeping. [field notes 16/02/14]

In this example, the Arabic greeting interjection was deployed by Mohamed to discipline misbehaviour. By indexing the recipient as a Muslim in his greeting, Mohamed expects a response in the appropriate code. As a repeat offender, Hamud has been conditioned to produce the obligatory response to Mohamed in his capacity as a senior figure at the supplementary school. Greeting rituals as typified in episode 9 above were some of the ways that Mohamed communicate his displeasure at students that have misbehaved. Mohamed's greetings at SLS students acted as a precursor to his interrogation of what he considers to be transgressive behaviour. These interrogations were routinely conducted in English. The following episode is an example of Mohamed's ritual interrogations that were initiated in a blend of languages.

Episode 10

This episode of Mohamed's classroom interaction shows how he attempts to transmit Somalis' Muslim identity to young SLS. In this encounter, Safiyo strolled in about an hour late and without offering an excuse for her tardiness, sat down beside Nasra and started talking.

Mohamed looked displeased and said, **"ASALAAMU ALECHUM**, Safiyo'. Safiyo looked at him and said, 'Hi sir'. Visibly unhappy with her response, Mohamed repeated in a louder voice, **"ASALAAMU ALECHUM**, Safiyo!'. Safiyo rolled her eyes and said

‘WA ‘ALECHUM S-SALĀM, *Macallin*’. Somewhat satisfied with her response, Mohamed said, ‘Thank you, at least this tells me you’re Somali, now could you tell me why you’re an hour late?’ [field notes 07/12/13]

In episode 10 above, Mohamed was displeased that Safiyo did not produce the desired response to his Arabic interjectional phrase. By repeating his utterance, Mohamed prompted Safiyo to produce the appropriate response. Although Safiyo eventually performed the required response unwillingly as exhibited by her ‘eye roll’, her token verbal action appeared to please Mohamed. Importantly, in Mohamed’s view, the ability to produce these Arabic greeting responses is a crucial signifier of the participants’ Somali identity. As such, the students’ responses to these typical speech events were routinely conditioned by Mohamed’s prompts. In short, Mohamed tried to enforce deference from Safiyo and although she complied in the end, it was through much effort on his part. However, Safiyo’s initial response to Mohamed merits further attention. I noticed that she is the daughter of a middle-class doctor with whom the teachers showed a tremendous deference and they used English extensively during their routine talk. Although she chose to identify herself as a Muslim person by wearing the hijab by default (see chapter 5), one way of understanding her refusal to produce Arabic greeting expressions is to look at the teachers’ interactions with her father. In fact, she was acting like her father. She refused to take part in these ritualised greeting forms in Arabic perhaps it is not a ritual that was practiced at her home. Like her father, she was not overly concerned about showing deference to Mohamed. Although Mohamed appeared to signal a certain level of discomfort with Safiyo’s behaviour, he did not reprimand her. This might be due to her father’s status among the participants at the site. The following episode provides an example of the ways Axmaadeey deployed formal English greetings on his students.

6.1.5 (b) Exaggerated formal English greetings as interrogative devices

This subsection shows some of the typical ways in which Axmaadeey reprimand students who breach the rules of social conduct at the school. In Axmaadeey’s classes, students who arrive late were expected to produce a reasonable excuse for their tardiness.

Episode 11

The following example shows how Axmaadeey typically deploys a formal English greeting phrase as a prelude to an interrogation of his students' poor timekeeping.

At 10.20 am, a Year 10 boy walked in about 20 minutes late for Axmaadeey's class and immediately sat down next to his friend. Axmaadeey looked at him and in a solemn voice said 'Good afternoon sir, how are you today?' The boy remained seated and said 'I'm fine, */Maacalin*'. Axmaadeey glared at the boy and repeated, 'Good afternoon sir, how are you today?' The boy immediately stood up and proceeded to provide his excuse for being late. Satisfied with the boy's excuse, Axmaadeey nodded and the boy sat down. [field notes 11/05/14]

In episode 11 above, Axmaadeey's routine communicative habit of inserting a term of address (sir/madam) in his formal English greetings to young SLS is a sign of his displeasure at students that do not observe the rules of conduct at the school. Students are expected to arrive on schedule and to behave well during Axmaadeey's teaching sessions. However, the ways that Axmaadeey produces these greetings warrants a closer look. Firstly, in episode 12, although the speech event was conducted in the morning (10.20 am) Axmaadeey used a formal English phrase 'Good afternoon' that marks the setting in the afternoon to indicate the boy's late arrival. Although the boy communicated the appropriate English expression 'I'm fine' followed by the respectful Somali term of address '*/Maacalin*', Axmaadeey repeated his utterance to communicate his annoyance at the boy's poor timekeeping. The boy immediately understood that he had to produce an excuse for his tardiness and he stood up as a sign of deference to Axmaadeey before doing so. The following is another example of Axmaadeey's habitual use of formal English greeting forms.

Episode 12

This episode shows how Axmaadeey routinely uses exaggerated formal English greeting phrases to reprimand what he considers to be transgressive behaviour among his students.

I sat in the far corner during Axmaadeey's Year 11 Maths class. The students were quiet as they worked on a task until Nasra's mobile phone started ringing. She answered the phone and said 'Can't talk now' and hung up. Axmaadeey looked at her for a few moments and said 'How do you do, young lady?'. Nasra said 'I'm good, */Maacalin*'. Axmaadeey

exclaimed ‘Ha, this tells me you’re not a native speaker’. Axmaadeey repeated ‘How do you do, young lady?’. Nasra looked puzzled, Axmaadeey laughed and said ‘You should say how do you do?’. Nasra continued to look puzzled and shrugged her shoulders. [field notes 12/10/13]

In episode 12, Axmaadeey’s annoyance at the disruption to his teaching was signalled by a period of silence whilst staring at Nasra before uttering the English greeting ‘How do you do?’ with the term of address ‘young lady’. Nasra communicated her resistance to Axmaadeey’s attempt to enforce deference in her informal English response of ‘I’m good’ followed by the Somali term of address ‘*Maacalin*’. However, Axmaadeey did not accept this response and labels Nasra as a ‘non-native’ English speaker due to her visible sign of insolence in her refusal to produce the formal English response such as ‘I’m very well, thank you’ or ‘How do you do?’. Axmaadeey’s response signalled a certain level of frustration that Nasra exhibited a slight disrespect for the teacher. People in ‘traditional’ Somali contexts expect deference but Axmaadeey did not quite receive it. and the example above revealed how a student’s deference to Axmaadeey might have been diluted in a modern context. Perhaps compulsory education for all children in modern nation states might be the root cause for the erosion of respect for teachers as opposed to traditional societies in which education was only accessible by the privileged groups.

As suggested in this subsection, extended and formal greeting rituals between the teachers and young SLS were typically conducted in the event of a breach in the rules of social conduct at the school. In the above, greetings are used by the teachers to summon the transgressor in advance of an inquiry of the reason behind the misbehaviour. Although there were visible signs of resistance to the expected rules of social conduct by the students, the recipients of these greetings were regularly *conditioned* to show deference to the teachers in the ways they respond. In this light, the practice of deference by the students is cultivated by the teachers’ regular communicative habits and in turn, the enforced enactment of the social hierarchy among members of SLS.

6.1.6 Typical greeting rituals among young SLS

Upon arrival at the school in the morning, Year 4 to Year 6 students are routinely ushered by one of the teachers to their allocated spaces prior to the start of the learning sessions. Once seated, these well-acquainted participants typically say ‘hi’ to their classmates or start conversing in English without observable verbal salutations or terms of address. Between 1.15 pm to 1.30 pm, about 15 Year 7 to Year 11 students typically congregate in the hallway and socialise among members of their age group. These students are not allowed to enter the school space until one of the teachers invites them in. This rule is imposed in order for (i) some of the teachers and parents to observe the Islamic practice of **DUHR** (afternoon prayers) and (ii) to reorganise the spatial configuration of the classrooms for the afternoon sessions. During this time, the hallway is typically filled with the sounds and laughter of the participants’ talk and, in my observations, the greeting rituals and small talk among young SLS were overwhelmingly conducted in English. The following example is indicative of how most of the student participants at the school greet each other.

Episode 13

In this episode, Nasra (female, 16 years old, student-informant) walked into the hallway and seeing Safiyo (female, 16 years old) standing nearby, walked and stood next to her.

Nasra: You all right?

Safiyo: Yeah [field notes 05/04/14]

In the above, Nasra greeted Safiyo by uttering the informal English greeting ‘you all right?’⁴⁶. In the exchange, ‘you all right?’ was used as an opening to the situated event of informal talk among friends. The example above was suggestive of the typical greeting rituals among SLS youth. The ways these rituals were performed communicated their identities as Londoners. In a sense, an aspect of Somali ethnicities among the youth at my site is the ability to produce contemporary forms of greetings.

⁴⁶ UK informal phrase used to greet someone at the same time as asking if they are well (CED available online at: <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/all-right>).

Section 6.1 has illustrated the multiple ways in which greeting rituals were performed at the research site. Although these situated events were typically brief encounters among SLS, they have provided a view of the ways Somali ethnicities are indexed. These typically small fragments of Somali and Arabic infused greetings and terms of address provide culturally encoded messages about the nature of SLS ethnicity. Group members' relationships are indexed by the day to day communicative behaviour that signals deference towards a person of higher social status. In short, the greeting and leave taking rituals shown in section 6.1 highlight the multiple ways SLS deploy asymmetric salutations to communicate deference and index the status of interactants. The linguistic codes that were deployed depended on the participants and the occasion in which the access rituals were performed. In sum, the analysis of greeting rituals among SLS shows how the nature of Somali ethnicities were indexed by the small communicative habits of Somali, Arabic and English greeting rituals at my research site.

6.2 Somali interjections as indexical markers of SLS ethnicities

At the research site, another communicative habit of SLS teachers were the routine deployment of single word or short phrases in Somali. Due to young SLS' lack of proficiency in Somali language, these little ritualised communicative habits are some of the ways that SLS teachers create a collective conscience of Somali ethnicity at the school. These regular expressions are tantamount to ritualised communicative acts in which collective beliefs and ideals of Somali ethnicity are unconsciously transmitted and cemented by the adults. La Fontaine (1971) observed that

‘ritual’ refers to all symbolic behaviour... ritual expresses cultural values; it ‘says’ something and therefore has meaning as part of a non-verbal system of communication... ritual actions are seen as exemplifying in another medium the cultural values that find verbal expression in statements about the world, society, man – statements which we call beliefs (La Fontaine 1971: xvii)

The following section is informed by La Fontaine's (1971) quote above. It investigates my informants' unconscious alignment with certain cultural values by analysing their use of some expressive interjections. Although these brief vocalizations were communicated in multiple codes, SLS' expressive interjections convey the speaker's attitude and were uttered to meet specific communicative ends. As Goffman (1981) contends, an

interjection ‘doesn’t seem to be a statement in the linguistic sense’ (Goffman 1981: 100) but instead, it is ‘a ritualised act’ (ibid: 100) which should be analysed in terms of the routine socio-communicative roles it plays, rather than any linguistic content it may have.

6.2.1 The significance of ‘*Waryaa*’ as an indexical marker of Somali ethnicity

During my fieldwork, I noticed that at certain moments, Somali ethnic particularities were signalled in small ways. In the following subsections, I will highlight the ways in which muted markers of Somali ethnicity are indexed by SLS’ communicative practices of expressive interjections. The following subsections argue that due to young SLS’ limited proficiency in Somali language, these little markers of Somali ethnicity are vital to SLS’ identities. For example, SLS have a habit of using the Somali utterance ‘waryaa’ (Hey or Oi!) to summon the attention of the intended recipient. This small but crucial interjection identifies the interactants in the situated events of talk as members of SLS. This particular communicative habit has also been reported by Lehtonen’s (2015) study of the Somali diaspora in Finland and she argues that ‘it can be used to index Somali ethnicity’ (Lehtonen 2015: 78). However, in contrast to the principally convivial nature of its usage in the Helsinki context, the following episodes suggest that ‘*waryaa*’ has specific meanings for SLS. These next episodes of Mohamed’s and Axmaadeey’s classroom talk show how ‘*waryaa*’ was deployed to get the attention of misbehaving students.

Episode 14

This episode shows how Mohamed typically uses the Somali interjection ‘*waryaa*’ to get his students’ attention. In this encounter of a Year 8 English lesson which I observed, Mohamed walked into the classroom with a stack of handouts. After he distributed the handouts, Mohamed held one with his left hand and said,

‘Ok, now look here, I want you to finish questions 1 to 3 only’. Hamid turned to his friend and whispered something. Visibly annoyed, Mohamed looked at Hamid and said ‘*Waryaa* (Hey)! You have something to share with the class?’ Hamid shook his head and looked at his handout. [Field notes 15/11/13]

In episode 14, Mohamed provided his instructions to the students in English. However, upon noticing the transgression by Hamid, Mohamed used the Somali interjection ‘*waryaa*’ (Oi!) to get the attention of the designated hearer (Hamid). The English utterance ‘You have something to share with the class?’ communicated Mohamed’s irritation at Hamid’s transgression of the rule of social conduct during class time. It is also noteworthy that Mohamed did not convey his indignation in the Somali language. Perhaps due to Hamid’s and probably most of his students’ lack of proficiency in Somali language, formal English to manage classroom behaviour. Mohamed’s communicative language behaviour is also mirrored by Axmaadeey’s routine talk as shown in the next episode.

Episode 15

Like Mohamed, Axmaadeey regularly uses ‘*waryaa*’ to communicate with his students. The following episode emerged from Axmaadeey’s Year 10 Maths classroom talk. In the midst of giving instructions to his students, Axmaadeey noticed a boy who had just walked into the classroom and immediately started talking to his friend.

‘Now I want you to do this sheet... *Waryaa* (Oi), Year 10! *Waryaa dhageyso* (Oi listen), come here sir ... come here, sit down here sir yeah, come on, no talking, straight away, start! Do you have a calculator? Yes? Good, this is just a revision, you should know this sir.’ [Self-recorded talk, mic on Axmaadeey 03/05/2014]

In episode 15, Axmaadeey uttered ‘*waryaa*’ (Oi) to a Year 10 student who had just arrived. However, as the boy did not immediately locate his seat and engage with the task, Axmaadeey repeated the Somali interjection ‘*waryaa*’ in conjunction with the Somali imperative verb ‘*dhageyso*⁴⁷’ (listen). ‘*dhageyso*’ communicated an urgency to comply and to ‘pay attention’ in Axmaadeey’s message to the student. After the student complied with the rules of classroom conduct, Axmaadeey communicated in English to ensure that the student understood the task at hand. Perhaps as further evidence of a language shift among young SLS, Somali language use has been reduced to small ritualised discourse markers by Axmaadeey and Mohamed in their communication with their students. The

⁴⁷ Dhageyso – verb, imperative (Awde, Axmed and Orwin 1999: 66)

following episode is an example of Mohamed's use of the discourse marker '*waryaa*' in his classroom talk.

Episode 16

This episode is an example of the typical ways that Mohamed used '*waryaa*' with the Somali imperative '*aammus*' (be quiet) in his classroom talk. In this encounter, Mohamed had to teach Year 6 and Year 7 students simultaneously because Ali, the temporary science teacher was ill. As he was monitoring the Year 6 students, some of the Year 7 students of mixed genders started talking amongst themselves. Frustrated by these students' infraction of the school's rule of social conduct, Mohamed peered over the room dividers and said

'waryaa! (Oi) *aammus*' (be quiet)! This is my last warning to you, behave or I'll tell your parents that you wish to stop coming here [field notes 15/02/14]

In episode 16, '*waryaa*' was used in combination with the Somali imperative verb '*aamus*'⁴⁸ (be quiet). To reinforce his message, Mohamed continued his oral chastising in English by threatening to report their misbehaviour to the students' parents.

It has to be noted that apart from the word '*waryaa*' and the examples of the Somali imperative verbs '*aamus*' and '*dhageyso*', the teachers had to convey their messages in English. Their communicative practices suggest that in general, student participants at the school were not proficient in Somali language. However, by using the word '*waryaa*'⁴⁹, the speakers signalled their identification with Somali language but more significantly, it indexes the addressees as Somalis. According to Laitlin (1977), in Somalia '*waryaa*' is a word to call a male person's attention' (1977: 42) which also symbolises Somali brotherhood as highlighted in a traditional Somali verse 'All men capable of carrying

⁴⁸ Aamus – be quiet (Awde, Axmed and Orwin 1999: 72)

⁴⁹ The usage of '*waryaa*' is also widely reported in the Somali diaspora in Finland (Lehtonen 2015) and that 'it can be used to index Somali ethnicity' (Lehtonen 2015: 78). Interestingly, Lehtonen (2015) records the usage of '*waryaa*' among the youth of various ethnic backgrounds in Helsinki. She further argues that this group invokes the term '*waryaa*' to project a contemporary hip hop identity.

arms whose call is *waryaa*' (Laitlin 1977: 42). In this light, '*waryaa*' is viewed as a term of solidarity among Somali men in Somalia which to an extent, reflects Somali traditional gender relations. Further, at my research site, the deployment of the interjection '*waryaa*' is governed by a particular kind of social etiquette. Adult SLS regularly use '*waryaa*' to communicate with students of both genders. With regard to interactions between adult and young SLS, I have not observed students using the Somali interjection '*waryaa*' to address the teachers or staff members. In the examples that I have presented, '*waryaa*' was a term that indicates the social distance between the adult and the students. Further, the cooccurrence of the Somali imperatives '*aamus*' (be quiet) and '*dhageyso*' (listen) are important communicative habits that signal Somali ethnicity. Apart from Somalis in the UK, other ethnic groups do not use these fragments of Somali language to communicate their messages. Among young SLS, the usage of '*Waryaa*' is not tightly regulated by gender relations as proposed by Laitlin (1977) but rather, by the status of the individuals among the group. The following episodes show how young SLS deploy '*waryaa*' in their typical interactions.

Episode 17

This episode of casual talk among young SLS males provides an example of how Abuubakar regularly deploy '*waryaa*' with his peers. During an English lesson, Abuubakar forgot to bring a pen to class and he tried to borrow one from Daud:

Abuubakar: *Waryaa!* Have you got a pen?

Daud: No

Abuubakar: Tsk, *Waryaa!* Asad, have you got one?

[Self-recorded talk, mic on Abuubakar, 12/04/14]

In the above episode, Abuubakar used '*waryaa*' to call for Daud's and Asad's attention in his request to borrow a pen. In the exchange above, the production and acknowledgement of the attention marker '*waryaa*' indexed Abuubakar, Asad and Daud as members of SLS. Second, the nature of their social relationship has also been indexed. In this particular peer group, Abuubakar is a habitual user of this interjection to summon his peers but I have not observed the other student participants use '*waryaa*' in their interactions with

him. This routine communicative behaviour among this group of SLS suggests that Abuubakar enjoys an asymmetrical relationship among his male peers. As a teaching assistant to Year 3 to Year 5 students at the research site, Abuubakar was well-respected and he occupied a privileged status compared to his peers. The following episode reveals how some young female SLS used '*waryaa*' in their typical talk at the site.

Episode 18

The following situated event of casual talk suggests that the Somali interjection '*waryaa*' was freely used by young female SLS. In this episode, Nasra walked into the classroom with her new backpack. She looked at Asad and said:

Waryaa! You like my new bag? [Fieldnotes 12/04/14]

Nasra's deployment of '*waryaa*' signals their equal social status as peers in the GCSE English class. The usage of the term '*waryaa*' among young female SLS suggest the word has developed new ways of indexing a collective Somali identity in the wider context of urban superdiversity.

In short, this subsection has shown how the nature of Somali ethnicities might be identified by the production of the small but distinctive markers of Somali language in the everyday talk among my key informants at the research site. Perhaps as a result of young SLS' generally limited proficiency in Somali language, '*waryaa*' has become a residual but significant indexical element of their Somali ethnicities. It has also shown how certain aspects of the traditional meanings of the word *waryaa* were maintained but it is not impervious to effects of the urban London conditions. Further, in Somalia, people originate and closely identify with different clans but after the mass movement of people to various locations all over Europe, what becomes less salient is clan identifications but more important is an emerging identity in these contexts. In the European context, '*waryaa*' is a linguistic feature that unite Somalis in the diaspora. This linguistic feature is shared regardless of where Somalis originate or their affiliation to particular clans. It is related to their embedded lives as Londoners, but it organizes them as Somalis. From its etymology as a word to call the attention of another Somali male, it has become

universally accepted as a part of the shared identities of all Somalis in Europe. The final section in this chapter shows how Muslim expressions form a part of the habitual communicative habits among the teachers at my site. It argues that the small Muslim expressions that express a range of emotions constitute a part of Somali ethnicities in South London.

6.3 SLS adults' invocations of Allah

During my period of fieldwork, I noticed that some mainly adult SLS routinely used Arabic interjections that invoke Allah in their talk. As I will show in the ensuing subsections, formulaic Arabic phrases were unconsciously and habitually uttered by Axmaadeey and Mohamed. I noticed that the communicative habits of Arabic interjections in their talk constitutes a part of the linguistic convention of adult SLS' social etiquette. These Muslim expressions were deployed in certain contexts to signal a range of emotions. This section argues that these indirect references to Somali ethnicity in South London were embedded with Muslim sensibilities.

6.3.1 Mashallah

During my observations of Mohamed and Axmaadeey's classroom talk, I noticed that their regular utterances were infused by the Arabic interjection 'Mashallah' (God has willed it). The examples below show some of the ways Mashallah was deployed by the teachers to communicate their joy and to praise the students.

Episode 19

Towards the end of his Year 9 English class, Mohamed looked at a girl's essay and remarked in Arabic '**MASHALLAH** (God has willed it)! Well done, keep this up!' The girl looked pleased and smiled at Mohamed. [field notes 08/03/14]

Episode 20

During Axmaadeey's Year 11 Maths class, he looked at a student's work on a task sheet as asked 'Where's the midpoint? Aha, fantastic, **MASHALLAH** (God has willed it), carry on'. [self-recorded classroom talk, mic on Axmaadeey 10/05/14]

Episode 21

At the conclusion of a two-hour GCSE Math session, Axmaadeey exclaimed '**MASHALLAH** (God has willed it), we did a lot today, come prepared for next week, excellent' [self-recorded classroom talk, mic on Axmaadeey 10/05/14]

In the episodes above, the Arabic phrase '**MASHALLAH**' (God has willed it) communicated the teachers' delight at their student's work. In addition, it indicates that the participants acknowledge their shared religious allegiance to Islam. The teachers' routine interjections of 'mashallah' communicated their joy but they also conveyed an encoded message that it is God who had willed the students' exemplary work. According to Bouchara, (2015), the interjectional phrase '**MASHALLAH**' is uttered by Muslims to thank God upon discovering or hearing good news because '[i]t is a sign of thanks for the blessings that Allah bestowed on an individual', (Bouchara 2015: 79). In this light, SLS teachers' utterances of '**MASHALLAH**' marked their appreciation of the blessings that Allah has bestowed on SLS students.

Episode 22

In addition to expressions of joy or praise, '**MASHALLAH**' may be used to communicate covert messages as shown in this episode of talk among adult SLS:

Ahmed's (11 years old, male, student) father walked in and said 'I'm here to pay his fees today'. Upon hearing this, Axmaadeey said '**MASHALLAH** (God willed it)! Oh yes, it's been long overdue, isn't it?' [field notes 09/11/2013]

In this episode, Axmaadeey's use of the interjection '**MASHALLAH**' (God willed it) signalled his joy upon hearing that money is forthcoming from Ahmed's father. However, the pointed note of sarcasm embedded in the manner in which '**MASHALLAH**' was

uttered indicated a degree of annoyance directed at Ahmed's father because of the delay in settling the overdue tuition fees which was confirmed by his English expression 'it's been long overdue'. The upcoming episode shows how '**MASHALLAH**' was deployed by Mohamed in his classroom talk.

Episode 23

This example shows how Mashallah was deployed by Mohamed to communicate a covert message to his student. The participants in the following self-recorded naturally occurring talk were Year 10 students of mixed gender. Mohamed was giving instructions during his Year 10 English class before Samsam (female, 15 years old) interrupted him by asking an inappropriate question about his personal life.

Samsam: *Maacalin* (teacher), I hear it's your birthday tomorrow, is it tomorrow?

Mohamed: (in a loud terse voice) **MASHALLAH**! Keep quiet! Do your work!

[Self-recording, mic on Mohamed 23/11/13]

In episode 23, as a practising Muslim, Mohamed unconsciously responded to Samsam's interruption during his class by uttering '**MASHALLAH**' as a way to saying that it is God who had willed his upcoming birthday. However, the terse tone in which Mohamed uttered this interjection revealed his indignation at what he viewed as a distraction to his teaching and that the question of his birthday should not be of concern to Samsam. Mohamed's imperative for Samsam to comply with the classroom rule of social conduct was reiterated in English.

6.3.2 Allah u Akbar

In addition to the Muslim expression '**MASHALLAH**', Axmaadeey regularly use the Arabic expressive interjection '**ALLAH U AKBAR**' (God is great) to convey certain emotions. An example of this communicative habit is found in Axmaadeey's typical talk in his classroom.

Episode 24

This episode shows one of the ways Axmaadeey habitually uses the Arabic phrase ‘**ALLAH U AKBAR**’ in his classroom. In the encounter below, Axmaadeey was giving his students a preview of the topics that he had planned to teach in his Year 10 Maths class.

Axmaadeey: Okay, we’re going to do factorising and quadratics **ALLAH U AKBAR** (God is great)! Each question, you do the last 6 sections... And then we turn it over, ‘Aha’, more challenging, I love this, oh, sir, plenty, plenty of exercise, **ALLAH U AKBAR** (God is great)! [Self-recorded classroom talk, mic on Axmaadeey 30/11/13]

In the situated event of classroom talk above, Axmaadeey started his session by outlining the task for the day in English before interjecting the phrase ‘**ALLAH U AKBAR**’ (God is great) at the end of his opening turn of talk. The reference to God was made after a preview of the topics that he had planned for the session.¹ According to Bouchara (2015), ‘**ALLAH U AKBAR**’ is utilised by all practising Muslims as a

call for prayer, during prayer, when they are happy, to express approval for what they hear, when they slaughter an animal, as a battle cry’... [it is typically uttered to] ‘magnify or proclaim the greatness of God (Bouchara 2015: 77).

In this light, Axmaadeey’s routine, unconsciously produced interjections of ‘**ALLAH U AKBAR**’ communicated his approval of the teaching material, he attributes the usefulness of the teaching materials to the greatness of God by invoking Allah. His habitual utterances suggest the nature of Somali ethnicities were intertwined with symbols of Muslim attachments. The upcoming sub section shows how another Muslim expression was typically uttered by the teachers at my site.

6.3.3 Alhamdulillah

In addition to the expressive interjections ‘**MASHALLAH**’ and ‘**ALLAH U AKBAR**’, SLS teachers routinely invoke God as a mark of their gratitude for the little positive outcomes in their everyday life by uttering ‘**ALHAMDULILAH**’ (Praise be to Allah). The following

episode show one of the ways this particular Muslim expression was used to signal the speaker's emotions.

Episode 25:

This episode shows how Axmaadeey use of the Arabic phrase ' **ALHAMDULILAH**⁵⁰' (Praise be to Allah) as a response to his student's compliance with his instructions in his Year 11 Maths classroom talk.

Waryaa! Abuubakar (male, 16 years old)! Where's my data handling? Where is it? Ah, **ALHAMDULILAH!** Start with question 6 [Self-recorded classroom talk, mic on Axmaadeey 12/04/14]

In episode 25, Axmaadeey's use of '*Waryaa*' was specifically targeted at Abuubakar. Upon discovering that Abuubakar had indeed brought the required worksheets to class, Axmaadeey said '**ALHAMDULILAH**' to convey his approval. In this light, even though Abuubakar was responsible for producing the worksheet, Axmaadeey's use of the interjection '**ALHAMDULILAH**' voiced his appreciation by invoking Allah. According to Bouchara (2015), the expression **ALHAMDULILAH** is used by most Muslims in their everyday life and that

[i]t is a statement of thanks, appreciation, and gratitude from the creature worlds to his/her Creator (Bouchara 2015: 77)

The following subsection shows another example of how the teachers at my site habitually use the Muslim expression 'Inshallah' in their communicative behaviour.

⁵⁰ Praise be to Allah' (Bouchara 2015: 77).

6.3.4 Inshallah

Further, SLS teachers' communicative habits in the episodes below also suggest that as practising Muslims, Allah should be invoked in advance of making future plans by uttering the Arabic phrase **'INSHALLAH'** (If God wills it).

Episode 26

This episode of classroom talk shows how the Arabic interjection **'INSHALLAH'** was typically used by Mohamed.

Mohamed: Okay, good, good, we have done a lot today. **INSHALLAH**, we'll finish unit 7 next week... [Self-recorded classroom talk, mic on Mohamed 28/03/14]

In episode 26 above, by the insertion of **'INSHALLAH'**⁵¹, Mohamed communicated the Muslim belief that future events are in God's hands. However, for Mohamed, **'INSHALLAH'** was also uttered as a statement of future intention as barring unforeseen events, his students will get to work on unit 7 for the following week. According to Masliyah (1999) it is common among Muslims that

[w]hen speaking of the future, a powerful incumbency from deep in the psyche is called upon which forces Muslims to use this expression. The use of this expression is a mechanism of social interaction. It is neither a simple means of shirking responsibilities nor a belief in fatalism ... [but] The religious duty of the Muslim to consider the will of God prerequisite signifies that one cannot conceive the fulfillment of an action, the occurrence of an event, the execution of a thought or a plan except if God wills it (Masliyah 1999: 99-100).

As Masliyah (1999) has argued above, formulaic Arabic expressive phrases that invoke God is ingrained in Muslims' typical communicative habits. Importantly, she pointed out that these phrases serve to oil social interaction among Muslims and should not be viewed as 'a belief in fatalism' (Masliyah *ibid*).

In short, as seen in section 3, routine Arabic interjections display Mohamed's and Axmaadeey's attachments with Islam. The habitual use of fragments of Arabic

⁵¹ Bouchara (2015) has highlighted that Inshallah is uttered by Muslims, 'When a person wishes to plan for the future, when he/she promises, when he/she makes resolutions, and when he/she makes a pledge, he/she makes them with permission and the will of Allah, leaving the results in the hands of Allah' (Bouchara 2015: 78)

expressions communicated the interactants' shared socio-cultural norms and beliefs. Their unconscious communicative habits of using Arabic interjections that invoke Allah are conditioned in Mohamed and Axmaadeey's everyday talk. These minute but significant exclamations served to create a local linguistic ecology saturated with signs and symbols of Muslim attachments and Somali ethnicities. A close analysis of the teachers' ways of deploying expressive interjections reveals the social relationships between the actors and their identifications with Islam. According to Ameka (1992), interjections are conventionalised ways of talking that contains expressive functions

that encode speaker attitudes and communicative intentions and are context-bound... they encode culture specific meanings in these languages... are indexical - indexing elements of the social relationships between the speaker and addressee (Ameka 1992: 106-107)

As Ameka (1992) points out above, a speaker's ways of vocalising emotions are conditioned as to form, occasion, and social function. Hence, a close analysis of my informants' routine vocalisations has uncovered the embedded 'culture-specific meanings' and the 'indexing elements' that reveal the participants' social relationships as a part of the Muslim brethren. I have also highlighted that to an extent, it is not the linguistic expression itself, but rather the contextual speech situation that determines the use and interpretation of Arabic expressive phrases among SLS. Although these Muslim expressions did not feature in most of young SLS' routine talk, they were nevertheless embedded in this linguistic ecology. These young informants absorb these little signs and symbols of Muslim sensibility without necessarily producing these expressions in their routine talk at my site. Young SLS have been conditioned to understand and respond to these Arabic expressive interjections if required. Further, young SLS' demeanour as recipients in the exchanges above suggested their acceptance of the 'Muslim identity' that is indexed by these interjections. However, as embedded residents who have spent the majority of their lives in a modern, relatively secular and liberal Western nation, Allah was not regularly invoked during my young informants' everyday talk.

Conclusion:

To sum up, this chapter has shown how a collective SLS identity was communicated by conducting an interpretive analysis of my informants' typical ways of talking at the research site. These previously un-researched details have also revealed some of the ways traditional, unforced deference to members of higher social ranking were bestowed by making the small gestures of respect and by initiating the greeting exchanges. I have also shown that the ability to produce particular greeting forms indicate one's membership at the site. Although performed in multiple linguistic codes, it is in the ways that greeting and leave taking exchanges were performed that provide indexical information of the interactants' social relationship. In section 2, I argued that minute but significant indicators of Somali identities were found in the ways that SLS use particular Somali interjections. Due to the lack of expertise in Somali language among young SLS, these discourse markers are small but significant indicators of Somali ethnicity at the research site. These small but recurring discourse markers in Somali language create a collective conscience of SLS. Further, SLS shared religious identity in Islam were routinely transmitted in the teachers' expressive interjections in Arabic. These typical communicative habits in Arabic displayed SLS teachers' Muslim piety, Allah was routinely and unconsciously invoked to convey a range of emotions. This chapter has argued that a study of the communicative habits of a small group of Somali immigrants is a fruitful way to analyse group members' observation of particular cultural and religious practices. These are the muted but significant ways in which Somali ethnicity may be understood in a multi ethnic locality in superdiversity. The upcoming chapter investigates the effects of local specificities such as the ingrained discourses of race and ethnicity, class and cultural practices on shaping local Somali ethnicities.

Chapter 7: Local Somali ethnicities in superdiversity

Introduction

By drawing on my informants' accounts of their interactions with their peers and local residents of diverse ethnicities, this chapter illustrates the unfolding of superdiversity in a specific South London context. Having outlined in chapter one how my thesis draws on some of Vertovec's (2007) insights on the concept of superdiversity (see page 42), Chapter 4 has shown how a part of the nature of contemporary superdiverse Somali ethnicities is constituted by the interaction of a host of traits including place of origin, migration trajectory and social class backgrounds of my informants. In this chapter, I show how the effects of 'place' - a scenario where my informants interact with people of diverse ethnicities in South London-impact on the situated and emergent nature of Somali ethnicities in the UK. Hence, this chapter shows why a proper understanding of the specificities of place is necessary to study the unfolding new social formation of Somalis in superdiversity. As Vertovec (2010) insightfully points out,

[g]iven the overwhelming fact that **most new migrants move into places populated by previous cohorts of immigrants or ethnic minorities** [emboldened in the original], a wide variety of interactions and integration processes occur among these groups – not just with regard to longstanding White communities. Indeed, many immigrants often only meet, live in the same building with, socialize or work with other immigrants or British ethnic minorities. These kinds of encounters and processes have hardly been addressed in social scientific research or policy development (Vertovec 2010: 93)

In response to Vertovec's (2010) invitation for research studies to focus on the specificities of 'place', a growing number of studies have included aspects of the locality in the descriptions of their research contexts. However, Vertovec (2017) points out that a range of these studies (Osipovič 2010, Jørgensen 2012, Colic-Peisker and Farquharson 2011, Neal et al. 2013) merely 'invoke super-diversity as a new condition or setting, and then carry on with describing whatever set of research findings they wish to present' (Vertovec 2017: 4). One of the noteworthy exceptions is Wessendorf's (2013) ethnographic study of the East London borough of Hackney which she conducted over a period of 18 months. By providing some compelling examples of social interactions among people with diverse ethnic and social class backgrounds, Wessendorf (2013) develops the notion of 'commonplace diversity', a scenario in which

ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity being experienced as a normal part of social life and not as something particularly special. In this context of commonplace diversity, attitudes towards diversity are generally positive (Wessendorf 2013: 407-408)

Importantly, Wessendorf (2013) discovered racism and class tensions among diverse ethnic groups are ever present, and that – despite a “normalized” perception of multiple differences in certain public places – people remain quite separate in their private spheres. Further, Wessendorf (2016) argues that convivial relations between people of different social backgrounds in Hackney is a resultant effect of the historical processes of diversification and ‘the normalisation of diversity over time’ (Wessendorf 2016: 450). More tellingly, Wessendorf’s (2016) work shows the effects of the ‘place’ in relation to conviviality in superdiversity. In her words,

[t]he point important in relation to conviviality is that there is something about a place being super-diverse not just in terms of ethnicity, but also in regards to languages, religions and lifestyles, which makes it easier to settle. In this context, social boundaries become so manifold and complex that, at least in public space, they lose relevance... there are so many different ‘groups’ and individuals present in the area that there is no established group which newcomers need to fit into (Wessendorf 2016: 460).

In the above quotation, Wessendorf (ibid) signposted the importance of attending to the specificities of the research context and she refers to the effects of ‘place’ as a space in which superdiversity is manifested by the variables of ethnicities, languages, religious backgrounds of the residents. She also points out that the absence of a dominant or established ethnic group might facilitate a generally positive experience of settling in by new migrants. Wessendorf’s (ibid) compelling argument is important for my study as social boundaries in South London are also complex and manifold due to the diversity of its residents’ ethnicities, languages used, religious affiliations and social class backgrounds. As such, this chapter is informed by some of Wessendorf’s (2013, 2016) insights, but it extends the research literature on superdiversity by showing why it is crucial to gain a proper understanding of the history and discourses of race and colour in a specific ‘place’ in researching the nature of contemporary urban ethnicities. Southwark in particular, is a locality where race and colour has a history of mattering emerging from the initial settlement of migrant groups since the 1940s. In the following sections, the reader will discover how historical discourses of Southwark in relation to the categories of race, ethnicity, social class differences and cultural practices matter for SLS in the ‘present’. As Amin (2002) succinctly puts it, an understanding of urban ethnicities requires a focus on

local liveability, that is, the micropolitics of everyday social contact and encounter. The constitution of such micropolitics, and the terms of engagement within them, are seen to be crucial (Amin 2002: 959-960)

Amin's (2002) quote above articulates the importance of investigating the micropolitics of local negotiations of ethnicity in any attempt to study the nature of urban ethnicities. By taking Amin's (2003) insights into account, this chapter reveals the social formation of Somali ethnicities emerging from my informants' accounts of the lived experiences of negotiating the micropolitics of daily social interactions with people who share their urban space. In addition, my informants live in a South London area where they are not immune from the pre-existing histories and traditions of discourses about race and ethnicities. Therefore, by taking the history and narratives of race and colour as a point of departure, section 7.1 reveals how as a group, my informants face problems with the processes of misidentification and their exclusion from publicly claiming a black identity among their multi-ethnic peers. Section 7.2 shows why an understanding of the relationship between local spaces, ethnicities and social classes is required to gain purchase on a view of the unfolding constitution of SLS ethnicities. Finally, in section 7.3, I explore my informants' social self-positionings in relation to embedded local cultural habits and transgressive practices that predated SLS' arrival at Southwark.

7.1 SLS ethnicities marked by local South London negotiations of ethnic differences

In this section, my informants' accounts of their everyday lived experiences in South London reveal how a pre-existing local set of intersecting discourses of race, skin colour and ethnicity operate to identify, exclude and characterise certain ethnic groups. A number of research studies on inter-ethnic encounters in superdiversity argue "complex new 'meaningful exchanges'" (Butcher 2010: 510) among ethnically diverse groups produces "a new, 'super-diverse' terrain in which 'old' structural indicators are less salient to social identities" (Francis, Burke, and Read 2014, 2). Some researchers also argue that inter-ethnic interactions in superdiverse contexts have resulted in the "blurring of [ethnic] distinctions" (Newton and Kusmierczyk 2011: 76) or the situation in which "clear-cut categories of difference (race, ethnicity, culture, religion)"

(Hatziprokopiou 2009, 24) are somewhat obscured as a result of everyday inter-ethnic encounters that ‘undermine held stereotypes’ (Osipovič 2010, 171). In short, the abovementioned studies make the general underlying argument founded on the positive effects of superdiversity, a scenario in which potential tensions emerging from ethnic or racial differences may have been mediated by the routine intermingling of people with diverse ethnic backgrounds. While this set of research studies on superdiversity provided useful insights on the nature of inter ethnic encounters in certain contexts, my data in this section show how social identities in South London are tightly regulated by the narratives of racial and ethnic differences specific to South London. These local narratives of race are salient in the ways certain residents’ social identities were construed to be ‘authentic’.

As I have pointed out in Chapter 3, people who identify as Somalis were relative newcomers in the borough of Southwark. As a group, Somalis are officially classified as members of the BME group (Rutter et al 2009) but my young informants’ accounts of their experiences of interaction with their multi-ethnic friends suggest that they face the problem of placing themselves within the available spectrum of possible black and brown ethnic positionings in South London. To an extent, my findings in this section parallel Wessendorf’s (2016) argument that forms of racism are not characterised by a simplistic white and black dichotomy, but ‘between long-established residents (both ethnic minority and white British) and newcomers more generally’ (Wessendorf 2016: 450). However, this section seeks to extend the research literature on the nature of superdiverse inter-ethnic relations in specific localities by revealing some the ways my SLS informants negotiate local discourses of ethnicities in ‘South Docks’. My informants have had to grapple with the problem of self-identifying as a black person because South London’s residents have particular fixed notions of ‘authentic’ black social identities. As I will show in this section, my informants’ small accounts of their local lived experiences show how young SLS were routinely misidentified and excluded from explicitly claiming a black social identity. This is not entirely surprising because in Britain, a black social identity indicates the collective identity of people of African and Asian descent in their struggle to overcome institutional racism during the 1970s and 1980s (Sivanandan in Back 1996). As Hall (1982) points out, black identity

had become part of an organised practice of struggles requiring the building up of black resistances as well as the development of new forms of black consciousness (Hall 1982: 59)

In particular, South London is the ‘site of black struggles and institutions’ (Back 1996: 113), it is a place where black people have historically suffered racially motivated hate crimes. An example is the momentous event triggered by a racial hate crime which resulted in the deaths of 13 children from a firebomb during a birthday party in New Cross, an area located in an adjacent borough to South Docks. This tragic event triggered the formation of the New Cross massacre action committee. This committee was able to organize an estimated 20000 activists who marched from New Cross to deliver a letter of protest to the Prime Minister’s Office at Number 10 Downing Street (Available at <http://www.georgepadmoreinstitute.org/archive/collection/new-cross-massacre-campaign>). One of the people who took part in the march is the political activist and artist Linton Kwesi Johnson (2017) who declared that the march

was a watershed moment because it made the British establishment take note of the fact that we had black power and we could mobilize that power and it was during that Thatcherite period that they began to speed up the process whereby a black middle class could emerge. Because before the 1980s black people had been on the periphery of British society, we were marginalized (Kwesi Johnson 2017).

Kwesi Johnson’s (2017) quote above articulates the struggle over black identity by the uprising of young black people to challenge institutional racism during the 1980s in Britain. More importantly, it points to the significance of what being a black person means in South London, it is an area where a positive notion of black identity in Britain was forged. As such, black social identities in South London are not freely distributed, it is a privilege that was earned by the struggles against institutional racism by the African Caribbean inhabitants in the 1980s. In South London, positive notions of black identity are tightly guarded by the descendants of those African Caribbean residents who took part in the struggles for racial equality. As such, the following subsections show how my young SLS informants’ struggle to stake a claim to an authentic notion of blackness were resisted by the descendants of the residents who had fought for the right to claim a positive black identity in South London.

7.1.1 Somalis and the problem of misidentification in South London

My informants' accounts in this subsection suggest that as a group, Somalis struggle to find a place within the black ethnic ecology of South London. One of the dominant themes emerging from my informants' accounts of the encounters with their multi-ethnic friends is their problem of being mislabelled. Episode 1 begins with some of my informants' accounts of their lived experiences of being misrecognised as belonging to a South Asian ethnic group in Southwark.

Episode 1

In the following episode of classroom talk, some of my informants describe their experiences of the process of being mislabelled with a pejorative term typically assigned to people of Pakistani or South Asian descent.

Setting: This episode emerged during a GCSE English class which focused on descriptive writing. For the session, I asked the student participants to write to a fictional penfriend to describe their place of residence. After a period of discussion in which my informants related some of their everyday lived experiences in South Docks, Abuubakar claimed that he was frequently labelled with a pejorative term that is historically associated with people of Pakistani descent:

Plus yeah, one thing is when you're Somali yeah, they say you're Paki for some dumb reason, like why call me Paki yeah, I'm not Pakistan and I'm like you're so dumb, like Somalia's in Africa (Classroom recording 09/11/13)

Safiyo's account below also suggests that Abuubakar's experiences were not isolated cases:

Yeah I've been called that, people don't know where Somalia is yeah, they say it's near Pakistan when you tell people you're Somali yeah, they say you're Pakistani (Classroom recording 09/11/13)

Abuubakar and Safiyo's sentiments above expressed their frustrations with the rejection of their self-declared identity as people of Somali descent. Abuubakar rejects the label 'Paki' levelled at him and points to the fact that Somalia is in Africa. Safiyo thinks the problem with mislabelling Somalis as 'Pakis' in South London might be due to the residents' lack of geographical knowledge which caused them to locate Somalia 'near Pakistan'. In Abuubakar's account, the term 'Paki' that was levelled at him by his peers was originally used as a derogative slur against British Asians who were viewed as

‘immigrants and often presumed illegal’ (Zuberi 2002: 43). In this light, the label that has been ascribed to Abuubakar and Safiyo were originally assigned to people grouped as ‘South Asians’ who were historically viewed to be illegal immigrants. However, it has to be noted that Abuubakar and Safiyo’s appearance might have caused the problem of misrecognition. SLS maintain diasporic connections to Africa but they do not look like the African Caribbean or West African residents of South Docks. Most of my informants were typically brown skinned with mostly straight hair. Being labelled a ‘Paki’ is a common occurrence for brown skinned people in the UK as Bhatia (2007) notes,

despite being an abbreviation for "Pakistani", its proponents tended to be less discriminating about its application - directing it against anyone with brown skin, be they Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi. Sometimes even non-Asians who happened to have a dark complexion found themselves on the receiving end (Bhatia 2007)

My informants’ accounts of being misrecognised as people of Pakistani descent in this episode suggest racial phenotypic features is one of the ways ethnicities are evaluated in Southwark. In the following episode, one of my informants thought that the problem of misrecognition in South London was due in part to Somalis’ Muslim identities.

Episode 2

In this episode, one of my informants thinks that her experiences of being misidentified as a person of Pakistani descent is directly connected with her Muslim identity.

Setting: This episode of my casual conversation with Safiyo transpired during a lunch break in the supplementary school. Safiyo was eating her sandwich at the corner of the classroom and I decided to join her. During our conversation, I decided to ask her about the experiences of being misidentified as a person of Pakistani descent. According to Safiyo, the problem of being misidentified is a frequent occurrence in South London:

Sir, I get it all the time, sometimes they’ll say I’m Pakistani because I’m Muslim. I’m not bothered anymore’ (Field notes 16/11/13)

Safiyo thinks her experiences of being misread as a person of Pakistani ethnicity is in part, due to her religious allegiance to Islam. As I have illustrated in chapter 4, Safiyo’s typical way of dressing visibly marks her religious affiliation with Islam and perhaps by

extension, contributes to her problem of being construed as a member of the Muslim Asian community. She has learnt to put up with the problem of misrecognition and misunderstanding in South London as she wasn't 'bothered anymore'. In her account, Safiyo has been interpolated as part of the South Asian community by her multi-ethnic peers in school because of her visible religious allegiance to Islam. As I have outlined at the head of this section, people of South Asian descent took part in the struggle to fight for equality in the UK and they have a deep history of public engagement with struggles over politics, culture, ethnic and racial equality. As such, visible markers of attachments to Islam were tightly associated with people of South Asian descent which in part, might have contributed to my informants' problem of being labelled with the pejorative term 'Paki'.

The episodes above have shown how some SLS youth have been misrecognised and their experiences of being recipients of a racial slur that was originally intended for people of Pakistani descent. In the upcoming subsection, SLS' accounts of their lived experiences also reveal the challenges that they have faced in their attempts to gain recognition as possessors of a locally authentic black identity in South London.

7.1.2 Somalis and the problem with membership of the 'black' ethnic category

In addition to the problem of misrecognition, my informants also claimed to have faced difficulties in their attempts to claim a black social identity in South London. The following episodes reveal some of the ways that my informants' desire to claim a notion of blackness were rejected on account of their phenotypic differences from local versions of 'authentic' black identities.

Episode 3

In this episode of classroom talk, my informants' accounts suggest that as a group, SLS were prevented from claiming a black social identity by their peers at school. The following reveals how some SLS youth were constructed as 'artificial' blacks by their peers as they somehow do not 'fit' a local South London version of black identity.

Setting:

In the following moments of classroom talk, my informants were engaged in a discussion of the positive and negative aspects of living in their place of residence. Having discussed the positive aspects of living in a multi-ethnic locale, Abuubakar triggered the conversation⁵² below in his account of the resistance he encountered in trying to assume a black social identity in South London.

1. Abuubakar: When you say you're Somali yeah, like you're not black, you're not black, how can I be not black yeah? Like what you talking about? (kisses his teeth)
2. Safiyo: You're artificial black, every time I have an opinion on like black stuff like, hair weave? They'll say what do you know? They say be quiet you're artificial black
3. Abuubakar: Sir, every time I say I'm Somali yeah? They'll say you're not black, you're not white, like Somalia is not in Africa? Then they start calling me Arab, I'm no Arab man.
4. Asad: I'm sorry but if you haven't got hard hair⁵³ yeah? You're not African, that's what my Ghanaian friend said yeah.
5. Shamsa: Yeah, they say I'm too fair, they sometimes touch my hand.... I think they don't know where Somalia is
6. Steve: Who? Who are they?
7. Nasra: Everybody, even the West Africans, Jamaicans and even the Asians.
(Classroom recording 02/11/13)

In this episode, social identities were explored, and it shows how my informants have been positioned outside a notion of 'blackness' by their peers in South London. In turn 1, Abuubakar claimed that whenever he declares his Somali ethnic identity, his membership into the black category was rejected. His words expressed a desire to self-identify as 'black' person which in contemporary Britain, is an indicator of cultural prestige and

⁵² I've numbered the interaction in order to analyse the accounts in turn. This is not representative of the naturally occurring classroom talk but it attempts to provide the reader with a sense of how the episode transpired

⁵³ Asad was referring to tightly curled hair

‘urban cool’ (Nayak 2005: 145). To an extent, Abuubakar’s desire to be associated with a ‘cool’ black identity may have stemmed from the fact that Somalis do not have a visible presence in the UK media and political landscape. Apart from the World Champion long distance runner Sir Mohamed Farah, Somalis in the UK as a group, has been largely invisible.

In turn 2, Safiyo’s words expressed her frustrations at being positioned as an ‘artificial black’ during her interactions with her peers. Her input on topics such as hair weave were dismissed due to the perceived inauthenticity of her ‘blackness’. In turn 3, Abuubakar complained about how Somalis were also excluded from the ‘African’ ethnic category. His account suggests that in South London, Somalis were viewed as an isolated group of people who do not belong to the ‘black’ or ‘white’ categories and at times, were misrecognised as people of ‘Arab’ descent. Asad and Shamsu’s accounts in turns 4 and 5 suggest that phenotypic traits such as hair and skin colour are some of the criteria that were used by their peers to assess a person’s claim to certain black social identities.

In turn 7, Nasra claimed that her membership in the black ethnic category has been denied by her West African, Jamaican and Asian peers. Nasra’s experiences might be related to the more secure public positionings of the West African, Jamaican and Asian ethnic groupings as compared with Somalis in the UK. Further, in contrast with the ethnic groups she mentioned, Somalis do not have former colonial connections with the UK. Although Somaliland was a British Protectorate, it was not colonised by the British empire. In addition, as relative newcomers to the UK, Somalis do not have the presence of the ‘hypervisible South Asian and African Caribbean’ (Knowles 2013: 652) ethnic groups and the numerical advantage enjoyed by people belonging to certain West African ethnic groupings in South London. As I have outlined at the head of this section, people of African Caribbean descent have fought over the right to equality, the carnival that is held every year in Notting Hill is one example of the resultant effects of their struggles. People of African Caribbean descent have also established a visible presence in the social landscape of superdiverse London and they possess recognisable faces. In addition, people of West African descent have established recognisable positions such as doctors, owners of corner shops and employees of local councils. This group typically pledges allegiances to various strands of Christianity and they have organised their churches in their areas of residence. Children of West African descent were also reported to be doing

well in school. South Asians on the other hand, have fought for the right to maintain their religious rituals such as the right to prayer and have engaged in public debates. Like their West African and African Caribbean peers, South Asians have a strong and recognisable public presence in all strata of society from doctors to corner shop owners.

In short, episode 3 shows how my informants were ethnically positioned by their multi ethnic peers in South London. Although some SLS youth might share some superficial similarities such as skin shade and tightly curled hair with the black residents in the locale, in fact, they do look different from people of West African and Jamaican descent. In this sense, an authentic black social identity is regulated by the boundaries that were erected by members with strong claims to the notion of blackness in South London. Cornell and Hartmann (1998) describe authenticity with respect to identities as a ‘social convention’ in which

[s]ome set of group members or outsiders selects a version of an identity and defines it as “authentic,” granting it a privileged status. They then use it to distinguish among persons and identities, past and present. (Cornell and Hartmann 1998: 94).

In this light, black identity in South London is a social convention in which its members have privileged status. People of African Caribbean and West African descent preserve this privilege by using a set of arbitrary conventions to restrict young SLS’ claims to a black social identity. My informants’ accounts express their desire to be accepted as members of the black ethnic group and they think Somalis are excluded by the effects of the discourse of racial phenotypic differences. However, my informants’ problems with exclusion from a notion of blackness was probably related to the history of what being black means in South London. Somalis were not a part of the collective African Caribbean movement that overcame institutional racism during the 1980s and due to their relatively small numbers as compared with their West African peers, could not establish a black social identity in South London. In the upcoming episode, Abuubakar’s account suggests cultural differences between Somalis and ‘authentic’ blacks might have been a factor in their problem with trying to stake a claim to a notion of blackness in South London.

Episode 4

In this episode, Abuubakar thinks the problem with claiming a black social identity for young SLS is related to cultural differences between Somalis and people with strong claims to black social identities in South London.

Setting: Casual conversational interview with Abuubakar (male, 17 years old) at the supplementary school. During this encounter, I asked Abuubakar about his experiences of exclusion from a black social identity by his peers and his response suggested that cultural differences were the root cause of the issue:

Yeah. You don't think black; you don't have the same mentality. You know blacks have a mentality, Somalis have a different mentality, Chinese have a different mentality. Maybe it is because of that because Somali people are Muslim, predominantly Muslim, there are also West African Muslims but they are not predominantly Muslim. They have a different culture and most of their culture is West African and class themselves as black culture. So therefore, they say that you're not black even though we are black. But maybe culturally, we're not the same. (Conversational interview 02/05/14)

Here, Abuubakar opines that Somalis' exclusion from a black social identity in South London is tightly connected with what he calls differences in 'mentality' and 'culture' between members of different ethnic groups. His account conveyed an ethnic absolutist view in which ethnic identity is something primordial and is constituted by a person's religious affiliation and cultural heritage that shapes what he calls 'mentality'. Yes, he has diasporic connections with Somaliland but as I have shown in chapter 4, Abuubakar was born and raised in London. He does not strictly adhere to a set of ethnic particularities that are perceived to be indicators of the narrative on 'authentic' Somali ethnicity. To an extent, he demonstrated an ambiguous relationship with a black social identity as he claims he doesn't 'think black' in this particular episode but he has tried to stake a claim on a positive notion of blackness on other occasions. In a sense, what he expressed in this episode is his dis-alignment from particular local versions of black social identities. In the upcoming subsection, my informants' accounts suggest that there is something about the history of race relations in South London where ownership within the black social category is hierarchically structured and policed by a set of local narratives.

7.1.3 The hierarchy of ownership within the category ‘black’

In South London, a hierarchy of ownership has been established among people who have staked legitimate claims to black identities. This subsection shows how the boundaries of black social identities were defined by phenotypic differences by the dominant black groups to exclude Somalis from trying to claim a notion of blackness.

Episode 5

In this episode, Asad explains how his physical appearance might have prevented Somalis from publicly claiming a black identity. Asad’s account also shows how the hierarchy of ownership within the black social category has been established by the dominant black groups in South London.

Setting: The following discussion emerged during a casual conversational interview with Asad at my research site. One of the topics which emerged is the question of his identity in relation to his claimed friendship group consisting of ‘mostly black or Africans and Chinese and Oriental Asian’ (Conversational interview 02/05/14):

Asad: They were saying we’re not black because of our hair and the way we looked.

Steve: Who said this?

Asad: My friends, they’re blacks and West Africans, so Ghanaian and Nigerian I know they were joking, but they were just saying it. (Conversational interview 02/05/14)

Asad’s account of his interactions with his peers provided a suggestive illustration of the ways that local discourses of ethnic differences between apparent black collectivities might be circulated. In the episode above, Asad’s interactions with his peers show how Somalis have been excluded from a black social identity by the people who have strong claims to the label ‘black’. Asad’s use of the personal pronoun ‘we’ in the extract suggests that Somalis somehow do not possess the phenotypic traits of ‘authentic’ black people in South London. Of significance is the way Asad distinguished the people he labelled as ‘blacks’ from people of West African descent. Although he did not specifically say it, Asad’s words suggest that people of African Caribbean descent occupy the pinnacle of the hierarchy within the black category in South Docks. In a sense, Asad’s sentiments above reflects the historical pattern of migration in South London which was highlighted

in Chapter 3. Jamaican families were among the first immigrant groups to establish themselves in certain areas of Southwark during the 1940s. Since then, as a group, African Caribbeans have established a highly visible presence at South Docks and have claimed strong ownership of the label 'black' in this area. In Back's (1996) ethnographic study of urban ethnicities in South London, his informant Louise declared,

But this is a black area, you know what I mean?... I suppose black people have made their own way and this happened to be the place they did it (Back 1996: 114)

However, due to the influx of Nigerian and Ghanaian immigrants in the area during the 1990s, notions of blackness have expanded to accommodate these groups who are officially categorised as 'Black Africans'. Perhaps due to their sheer numbers in this locality (see chapter 3), Nigerians and Ghanaians have been able to lay claim to certain black social identities. People of African Caribbean, Nigerian and Ghanaian descent in turn, use a set of criteria based on phenotypic traits to exclude Somalis from staking a claim to a 'black' or 'African' social identity. As relative newcomers to the area, people of Somali descent merely constitute about 1 % of the population in the borough (Southwark Council 2011 census) and were consequently excluded from the hierarchy of belonging within the category 'black' or 'African'. My informants' accounts in this section suggest groups with strong claims to black identities police group membership. It is a privilege that is not freely given to newcomers to the locality. As Back et al (2012) have signposted,

[n]ew foreigners who bear a striking similarity to old foreigners are consequently ranked lower on a hierarchy of belonging. The price for a form of contingent belonging for migrants or their descendants may be paid in part by being complicit within a hierarchy that places newcomers and others below them (2012: 148).

In this light, as 'new foreigners' who bear some physical similarity to African Caribbean and West African groups, Somalis were excluded from Southwark's hierarchy of belonging to local black identities. The prestige that is associated with certain black identities was unavailable to Asad. However, it should also be noted that Asad considers his 'black and West African' peers to be his friends and his account in episode 5 provided a suggestive illustration of the ways local negotiations of ethnic differences might be enacted by young people in this particular locality. Having shown examples of young

SLS' exclusion from black social identities, the forthcoming subsection reveals how some of my informants have absorbed and unconsciously produced a set of embedded South London white working-class discourses in their descriptions of their black peers and neighbours.

7.1.4 The enduring significance of white working-class discourses in South London

The preceding subsections have provided my informants' accounts of the ways they have been excluded from claiming an authentic black identity by their peers at Southwark. However, young SLS were not passive recipients of pejorative name calling such as 'Paki' and being labelled not black or white. As this subsection demonstrates, some of my informants have learned to cope with exclusion from identifying with certain dominant black groups by responding with racist name calling and by unconsciously echoing historical discourses of race that were circulated by the original white working-class residents in Southwark.

Episode 6

One of the ways that my informant, Asad, responded to his exclusion from a black identity were his deployment of pejorative terms that trace the 'roots' of his black peers. This episode provides an example of how Asad uses racist name calling to make ethnic distinctions from his friends of African Caribbean descent.

Setting: Conversational interview with Asad at the research site. The following is Asad's response to my question of his black identity:

I'm black but I'm not really a slave, I wasn't part of the slave trade (Conversational interview with Asad, 17 years old, 02/05/14)

In Asad's quote above, he self-proclaimed to be a black person but at the same time, distances himself from the political legacy of slavery that was endured by the ancestors of most of his African Caribbean friends. Black identity in this light, is seen as a construct that is associated with a history of being enslaved. Somalis do not share the history of enslavement by the colonial powers that were suffered by the ancestors of Asad's African

Caribbean peers. Asad's use of the pejorative term 'slave' could also be suggestive of the ways racist name callings might be circulated by Somalis and their West African friends to pejoratively distinguish themselves from their peers of African Caribbean descent. The term 'slave' was also experienced by Back's (1996) informant, Mark who commented

if you are an African that has come from the Caribbean then chances are you must have been a slave and I don't care, people will never forget slavery (Back 1996: 147).

While Asad reported that the exchanges with his peers in episodes 5 and 6 were conducted in a jocular atmosphere, his account provided a suggestive illustration of how ethnic and racial differences might be negotiated between people with varying claims to blackness in South London. In Evans's (2003) ethnographic study of South London, she reported intense levels of hostilities between people of Jamaican and Nigerian descent and that it is

ironic that white and Asian people lump black people all together when there is much tension and rivalry between the different groups within these apparent black collectivities (Evans 2003: 150).

In this light, black identities in South London are contested by groups with varying claims to notions of blackness and importantly, there isn't a universal notion of what it means to be black. Although people of African Caribbean descent have fought for a positive notion of black identity, their history of being enslaved were retold by members of other ethnic groupings within the category 'black'. In addition to the pejorative term 'slave', the following episode shows how some of my informants' unconsciously echo deeply embedded discourses of race originally used by the white working-class inhabitants of Southwark at the onset of the area's settlement by African Caribbean immigrants.

Episode 7

In this episode, my informants' accounts communicate their distancing from some transgressive practices that are tightly fixed on certain black residents in South Docks. This encounter also shows the maintenance and transmission of a set of historical local discourses of race, ethnicities and social class distinctions at Southdocks.

Setting: In this episode of classroom talk, my informants were tasked with writing a descriptive essay on their place of residence. As Daud and Abuubakar were engaged with small talk at the back of the classroom, I decided to provide a platform for my informants to share their local lived experiences in my attempt to draw their attention to the task at hand.

1. Steve: Right, right right since you guys are not very engaged today, let's talk about this OK, alright? Let's talk, forget about writing first, let's just discuss your area...

2. Abuubakar: There's too many black people

3. Daud: (unintelligible) Yeah, too many black people

4. Steve: There's too many black people? What do you mean?

5. Daud: It's not like they're bad people, they live in yellow brick⁵⁴

6. Steve: I'm not saying they're bad, tell me what do you mean by too many black people

7. Asad: Tell 'im

8. Abuubakar: It's just there's a lot of Black people, uh like there's too many ethnic minorities that live in my area, you hardly see whites, well, chavvie white people (Classroom recording 30/11/13)

Here, the relationship between ethnic and social class differences among the residents of South Docks were raised by my informants. In turn one, Abuubakar's and Daud's assessment that their place of residence contains 'too many black people' were evocative of the narratives of race and colour emerging from Southwark's white working-class residents' in response to the influx of African Caribbean people into the area during the 1960s (see chapter 3). While Daud in turn 5 specifically pointed out that he did not associate black people with 'bad people', his reference to 'yellow brick' suggests otherwise. In his estate, 'yellow brick' is a high-rise tower resided by a large concentration of black people and Daud claimed that it is an area known for gang fights and the consumption and trading of illegal drugs (Casual conversational interview 02/05/14). Daud and Abuubakar's sentiments above allude to their perception of the effects of sharing an urban space with certain black neighbours. They viewed this group of black people to be undesirable neighbours who are entrenched in transgressive

⁵⁴ I found out later that Khalid referred to a yellow bricked tower block in their estate with a high concentration of Black Caribbean residents

behaviour and criminal activities. Further, Abuubakar's use of term 'ethnic minorities' suggested that his view has broadened to include ALL non-white residents. In this light, he does not see himself as belonging to either the 'black' or 'ethnic minorities' grouping in his area. He did not seem to realise that he is categorised as a member of an ethnic minority by the very discourse he reproduced. As such, Abuubakar has inadvertently implicated himself in the group viewed to be undesirable neighbours by the original white working-class residents in his estate. However, in turn 8 Abuubakar also made the distinction between what he calls 'whites' and 'chavvie white people'. 'Chav' is a label that is associated with the white working classes who live in socially deprived areas and who are perceived to be over reliant on social benefits (Hollingworth and Williams, 2009). In his account, Abuubakar conflated the discourse of race and ethnicity with the discourse of class differences in which 'chavvie whites' were lumped together with blacks and ethnic minorities. Abuubakar's words communicated his social distancing from the white and black people he considered as belonging to the working classes. In this light, Abuubakar's opinion reflects Hall's (1980) observation that

race is the modality in which class is "lived", the medium through which class relations are experienced (Hall 1980: 55).

The exchanges in episode 7 could be understood one of the ways my informants positioned themselves in relation to social class differences. Although they claimed to have been socially excluded from identifying as a black or Africans in episode 6, young SLS do not want to be associated with the negative stereotypical view of certain black and white working-class people. According to Evans (2003), '[c]lass understood as a cultural difference becomes a more complicated subject for analysis than an economic investigation would allow' and in Southwark, 'the emphasis on racial and cultural difference makes less likely the solidarity that shared class position would seem to make logical' (Evans 2003: 245).

Importantly, episode 7 shows how vestiges of white working-class discourses continue to be salient in South London. Roger Hewitt's (1996) ethnographic study of white working class and black youths in an adjacent area to South Docks showed how the locality bears traces of historical discourses of race. The young white people that he studied stated their

disadvantage in ways that pointed to the link between race and class positions in their identities. Hewitt's (1996) informants justified their anti-black discourses by shifting the blame to its black residents in what they viewed to be injustices to the area's white residents. For example, Hewitt's (1996) 15-year-old female informant said

I don't like blacks full stop, right. We brought 'em over 'ere for slaves but now they're getting all the money and taking it all off out, our money, and then we can't pay for our water, tax or anyfing, (sic) so I think they should go back to their own country (Hewitt 1996: 16)

Further, Hewitt (2005) reported that

[b]eyond outright racial slander there is a range of narratives that goes from the incorporation of racial and ethnic stereotyping to the recounting of personal experiences that implicitly or explicitly confirm negative views of minority groups, and/or account for someone's success or failure...with reference to race (Hewitt 2005: 70).

Some of the findings of Evans's (2003) study in part, echo Hewitt's (2005) argument above as she discovered how white residents in Bermondsey explicitly blamed the presence of black people on the estates for the demise of their area and for the escalation of violent tension. According to her informant Mark, the settlement of black people in areas within Southwark were perceived to have a negative causal effect on local liveability and in his words,

I hate 'em, they come into the estates and ruin 'em because they come from living in mud huts and then that's why they don't know how to keep their places clean and before you know it it's spoiled where they can't even put their rubbish in the skip properly' (Evans 2003: 214)

Evans (2003) suggests that this set of discourses emerged from the need to apportion blame on outsiders, 'of whom black people have become the most potent visual symbol' (Evans *ibid*: 215). In this light, Abuubakar's disalignment from certain black people who share the urban space in which he lives seems to be contoured by a set of historical discourses which was circulated by the former white residents of South London. In short, my informants' struggles over ascribed race-based labels have shaped their unconscious alignment with a white working-class racist ideology. In other words, young SLS echo ingrained South London white working-class discourses of race and colour in response to Somalis' exclusion from assuming a black identity.

Section 7.1 summary

Section 7.1 has shown how the nature of SLS ethnicities have been construed in relation to the embedded discourses of ethnicities in this locality. In superdiverse South London, Somalis were frequently misrecognised as people of Pakistani descent by their multi-ethnic peers. My informants have also been excluded from identifying as blacks, they were positioned as ‘artificial blacks’ due to the lack of shared history of what it means to be black in South London. Somalis in the UK also do not have a strong colonial connection with the British empire and they do not possess the recognition that were established by people of African Caribbean, West African and South Asian descent. In response to their social exclusion from staking a claim to a notion of blackness by their peers, my informants echo a set of historical racist discourses that were produced by the former white working-class residents of South Docks. My informants have also unconsciously associated particular ethnic groups with specific traits, they position themselves away from certain groups of working class black and white people who were viewed as undesirable residents in their neighbourhood. In short, the importance of investigating the history and local discourses of ethnicities in superdiverse localities cannot be overstated. As I have shown, young SLS were embedded in an area with strong notions of blackness that excluded their membership to a black social identity. Further, my informants’ accounts also revealed that while the demographics of this place has changed over the past 60 years or so, embedded white working-class discourses of race and colour remain in circulation by residents of diverse ethnic backgrounds.

7.2. Somali ethnicities in relation to local spaces

This section suggests that an aspect of my young informants’ social identities was marked by their references to the discourses of race, ethnicity and practices of certain working-class residents within specific areas in Southwark. As I have shown in Chapter 3, within the borough of Southwark, people officially classified as blacks or black Africans were mostly concentrated in South Docks and Livermore whilst higher numbers of white British residents populate Bermondsey and Rotherhithe. As such, the wards within the borough of Southwark are delineated by ethnic boundaries that are central to forms of neighbourhood identification which by extension, shapes the articulation of perceived racial and social class differences. These clearly delineated ethnic spaces in a superdiverse locality have particular meanings for my informants. My

informants' accounts of their experiences of living in the ethnically segregated urban space and the experiences of their contact with established residents within certain localities in Southwark could also be viewed as one of the effects of superdiversity. As Vertovec (2017) points out, the conditions of superdiversity may also produce

new patterns of inequality and prejudice including emergent forms of racism, new patterns of segregation, new experiences of space and "contact" (Vertovec 2017: 2)

In addition, Wessendorf (2013) points out that while most studies on superdiversity tend to focus on the question of ethnic, national and religious differences, in some contexts, social class differences matter in quite crucial ways. Informed by Vertovec's (2007, 2017) and Wessendorf's (2013) observations, this section examines my informants' unfolding social South London identities as constituted by the effects of living in an area that is delineated by ethnic and social class boundaries. The data in this section show how my key informants position themselves in relation to the ethnic and social class differences among the residents of certain areas in Southwark. For example, the following episode shows how Bermondsey was constructed by my informants as a place that is tightly bound up with an image of a white working-class enclave in multi-ethnic South London.

Episode 8

This episode shows how an aspect of young SLS ethnicities were marked by their awareness of the ethnic and sociocultural specificities of 'place'. My informants' accounts below demonstrate their self-positionings in relation to the social landscape and cultural dispositions of the residents of Bermondsey, an area adjacent to South Docks.

Setting: GCSE English class. I walked into the classroom to find my informants engrossed in a conversation. As I was getting my handouts ready, Abuubakar was talking with Safiyo about his friend's conversation with a person from Bermondsey⁵⁵.

⁵⁵ According to Evans (2003), Bermondsey is a white working-class enclave which was once so inward-looking that one of her older female informants recalled how her father accused her of bringing a foreigner home when, in her youth, she introduced him to her boyfriend who was also white and working-class, but hailed from an adjacent ward. The sense of isolation, a siege mentality almost, of the inhabitants of Bermondsey was further increased by mass immigration during the 1960s and 70s: while Bermondsey remained largely white, the neighbouring areas were populated by black people..

1. Abuubakar: Bermondsey is some white dump. His friend that he was chatting with yeah, walks like a chav
2. Safiyo: They walk like that because of the heavy chains (laughs)
3. Steve: What?
4. Abuubakar: Bermondsey yeah they're not working class people, like, not even working class. Underclass.
5. Steve: Well, how, how would you describe that? Why would you say that?
6. Abuubakar: I meant they're mostly racist. They're not good people, and they're underclass. They're not even working because most of them are underclass trash, white people.
7. Steve: What do you mean by "underclass"?
8. Abuubakar: Most of the people that live in Bermondsey. The working class, yeah, are people that work, you know.
9. Steve: Mmm-hmm.
10. Abuubakar: Underclass are people that have just dropped out of life, that (chuckles)... drunk and everything. They're just drunk. They just forget life, that... And then there are people that are even worse than that. Working class are people that work. Like, they don't have that much money, but they're just, like, making a living. Underclass people are people that are just finished, on benefits, taking drugs, alcohol and all that
11. Steve: Mmm-hmm Okay. So you're saying that Bermondsey is full of people like that?
12. Abuubakar: Yeah, kind of.
13. Asad: Not kind of; is.
14. Steve: Is.
15. Abuubakar: Sir, do you know my, my cousin used to live there, yeah? And somebody was troubling him and came at him with a knife, and like, I beat him up. I said 'you racist, you crazy'. My cousin used to live there. Like, it's racist there. (Classroom recording 01/03/14)

The exchanges above show how my informants communicated the relationship between place, social class and racist tendencies among certain white working-class residents in Bermondsey. In turns 1 and 2, Abuubakar and Safiyo used the pejorative term 'chavs' to refer to ALL white working-class people in Bermondsey. For my informants, white people in Bermondsey were stereotyped as racists who have an affinity for wearing jewellery with a particular way of walking. Locally described as 'bowling' (Evans 2003: 54) in Bermondsey, this way of walking is one of the ways young white working-class males project their 'toughness'. Second, the pejorative term 'chav' which Abuubakar labelled on residents of Bermondsey represents a popular reconfiguration of the

underclass (Heywood and Yar 2006). In turn 4, Abuubakar produced the common trope about how people who receive welfare benefits are freeloaders who abuse the state welfare system. More significantly, he made the distinction between the working classes and what he terms as the 'underclass'. Abuubakar's words construct the underclass as a group who are chronically reliant on welfare benefits and linked with high levels of drugs and alcohol abuse. Abuubakar's sentiments reflect Murray's (2001) argument that the underclass is affixed to a distinctive set of cultural dispositions straightforwardly linked to behavioural patterns and choices including chronic welfare dependence and antisocial conduct. Abuubakar's words in turn 10 expressed his disdain for people he considered to belong to what he considered to be members of the 'underclass'. For Abuubakar, people belonging to the working classes view gainful employment in high esteem and endeavoured to 'work regularly and work hard' (Murray 2001: 27).

Second, while Abuubakar's assessment of the racist and violent tendencies among certain white residents should not be trivialised, the history of rivalry between South Docks and Bermondsey predates the arrival of ethnic minorities. Territorial skirmishes between South Docks and Bermondsey is an ingrained South London practice and historically,

[w]hite-working-class men from Bermondsey battled against their enemies in adjacent manors in South Docks, Walworth and the Old Kent Road long before immigrants from Africa, Jamaica and Bangladesh arrived. The dynamic of these territorial conflicts is the historical precedent that governs all present transformations (Evans 2003: 185).

However, the historical battle lines drawn on territorial rivalry in Southwark has been transformed to fights that are triggered by racial or ethnic differences. For example, one of Evans's (2003) informant declared that

[s]omething's got to be done because they're fucking everywhere, taking over, but I'll tell you this, they're not having Bermondsey. All the other white people in London are watching us to see what we're going to do because they know that we're the last stronghold and we've got to fight for it because some of our Granddads went to fuckin' war to fight for Bermondsey and we're not gonna give it up so that the fuckin' blacks can take it over and turn it into a dirty smelling shithole (Evans 2003: 242).

As Evans (2003) noted above, the cultural practice of battles among people residing in different parts of Southwark has been established long before the arrival of migrants in

the area but the battle lines drawn on post code rivalry between Bermondsey's and South Docks' white residents have been reformulated to accommodate the dimensions of ethnic differences.

To sum up, this episode has shown how as residents of Southwark, my informants were conscious of the racist tendencies of certain white working-class residents in specific areas. My informants' accounts also express their disdain for the cultural dispositions and practices that are associated with the white working classes in Bermondsey. By using the personal pronoun 'they' to describe the residents of Bermondsey, my informants distanced themselves from what they considered to be the ingrained cultural practices and habits of the 'underclass'. The following episode shows how my informants' accounts of their local lived experiences are inflected by their awareness of the symbolisms associated with some supporters of their local football club.

Episode 9

This episode is an example of my informants' accounts of the racist symbolisms that are attached to Millwall, a football club located in Bermondsey. It shows how my informants' South London identities emerge from their accounts of the racist and violent tendencies associated with a section of Millwall's supporters.

Setting: Conversational interview with Asad at the research site (02/05/14). During this encounter, Mohamed (male, English teacher, 46 years old) and Daud (student informant, 16 years old) were also present and have contributed to the exchanges below. The topic of the conversation prior to the episode below centred on Asad's strong support for Arsenal, a football team located in North London. Asad explained that he does not support his local football club due to the racist and violent reputation of some of its supporters.

1. Asad: But if I said, alright, if I live near them, I would have to support Millwall, and I'm not supporting a racist team, so....
2. Steve: Ah. So why would you call Millwall a racist team?

3. Asad: Have you seen them?
4. Steve: No. What do you mean?
5. Mohamed: If you go there, are they going to club you?
6. Asad: Yes. They've come down before.
7. Mohamed: But they're just football fans
8. Daud: They come from South Bermondsey. I live where they live. They're not racists
9. Asad: Yeah, they are racists. All their supporters, they come on trains. They don't even live in the area. They all live in Kent.

[Conversational interview 02/05/14]

The exchanges above demonstrated Asad's knowledge of the practices of a section of Millwall's hardcore supporters. Asad does not support his local football club because of his dislike of the racist imagery that is tightly bound with certain fans of Millwall. In response to Mohamed's query about whether he feels physically threatened by Millwall fans, Asad claimed that the threat is real as 'They've come down before' (turn 6). Asad's opinion parallels with some of the findings in Back et al's (2001) study which observed a high frequency of racism amongst a section of Millwall's supporters. Back et al (2001) discovered a

stark contrast between the high frequency of racism observed amongst some sections of Millwall's support, when compared to neighbouring Crystal Palace where racial abuse from fans was almost non-existent. This difference can be explained in part by the contrasting nature of these fan cultures. Millwall's collective imagery and symbolism is tightly bound up with an extreme localism and traces of the white working-class communities that worked the docks and that have in large part disappeared (Back et al *ibid*: 96).

It is also important to note that competing interpretations are at play as in turn 8, Daud disagreed with Asad's assessment. As a resident of Bermondsey, perhaps Daud was referring to his multi-ethnic neighbours because Millwall's stadium is located in an area populated by ethnic minority communities that constitute about 40% of the population (Back et al *ibid*). Importantly however, Back et al (*ibid*) discovered that the

culturally heterogeneous nature of South London life is resisted or refused within the collective symbolism of Millwall, which represents a white enclave in an increasingly multi-racial environment (Back et al *ibid*: 96).

Further, in turn 9, Asad rejected Daud's assessment that Millwall fans do not have racist tendencies as he was aware that the club's core supporters do not reside in Bermondsey. Asad's account in turn 9 is supported by another of Back et al's (ibid) observation which discovered how Millwall's

support is drawn from the outer London suburbs, from where fans migrate every Saturday to New Cross, reversing albeit temporarily- the patterns of residential 'white flight' (Back et al ibid).

Asad's accounts in this episode demonstrated his lived experiences as a local South Londoner who was attuned to the practices and ideology of Millwall's hardcore supporters. He distances himself from the symbolisms associated with the supporters of his local football club. As such, an aspect of Asad's Somali ethnicities was shaped by his references to the practices and symbolisms of the locality's original inhabitants which marks him out as a local South Londoner.

Section 7.2 summary

The episodes in section 7.2 have provided some of my informants' accounts of the relationship between urban spaces and inter ethnic contact in a superdiverse arena. My informants' experiences of urban spaces in South London were marked by the practices, dispositions and social class backgrounds of the residents of the area. My informants' accounts suggested that the tradition of local rivalry between the different wards in Southwark has been maintained but the original postcode territorial skirmishes have been replaced by one of racial differences after the phenomenon of 'white flight' from South Docks. Second, my informants' accounts express their disapproval of the perceived cultural habits of the 'underclass', their words expressed their social distancing from a section of working classes in Bermondsey who were perceived to be 'finished'. As local residents, some of my informants demonstrated their awareness of the symbolism that is tightly intertwined with Millwall, a football club in Bermondsey. In sum, this section has shown how a part of Somali ethnicities should be understood as an interaction with the particularities of local urban spaces and the effects of contact with local residents. At the time of fieldwork, my informants communicated their identities as local South Londoners who were attuned to the meanings and ideologies of a section of local residents and their

cultural practices. Young SLS disalign from the historical and contemporary cultural dispositions of the white working-class residents in this area. However, as embedded residents of South London, SLS are not impervious to the effects of contact with established white and dominant black ethnic groupings in superdiverse South London. In short, an aspect of SLS ethnicities were marked by the narratives of ethnic and social class differences specific to areas within South London.

7.3 SLS ethnicities in relation to local transgressive practices

This section shows how an aspect of SLS ethnicities in South London is constituted by the interaction of local working-class practices such as over reliance on social welfare benefits, the transgressive cultural practices of fighting and the consumption of cannabis among sections of its residents. In chapter 3, I highlighted the fact that the overriding majority of residents in South Docks are council tenants who receive some form of welfare support. In addition, the locality is also perceived as an area with high levels of anti-social behaviour such as fighting and the dealing and consumption of illegal drugs among its residents. With these ingrained practices as the backdrop of their local space, this section explores the ways in which my informants position themselves vis-à-vis local transgressive practices. To an extent, this section reveals how localised ‘negotiations of ethnicity – inflected by class practices, cultural habits and ingrained norms – are seen to matter in quite crucial ways’ (Amin 2002: 960) in the social formation of Somali ethnicities in South London.

7.3.1 Local transgressive practices 1: the discourse of welfare benefit recipients

During my period of fieldwork (2013-2015), the topic of social welfare was a hotly contested debate among UK politicians and the media. As my informants live in a socially deprived South London locality, the following episodes show how Mohamed and Axmaadeey position themselves in relation to the people who receive welfare benefits.

Episode 10

The following encounter shows the process of Mohamed's social self-positioning in relation to the topic of social welfare benefits. His account below shows how his opinion on welfare benefits has shifted over time.

Setting: The topic of this episode emerged place during a meal with Mohamed at a kebab restaurant on Camberwell Road. After the students had left the supplementary school, Mohamed invited me to join him for dinner. During the meal, he reminded me of our conversation about the planned welfare cuts by the UK government. Mohamed used to think that the reduction in welfare benefits would severely hurt members of the Somali community who rely on governmental support for their everyday needs. However, his experiences as a public-sector employee who is tasked with getting people back on the job market have altered Mohamed's view:

Steve, I had to literally write their CVs and send out applications, but they wouldn't turn up for the interviews! (makes a clapping motion with his hands). I've tried so hard but they are completely useless. (Field notes 11/11/13).

Mohamed's sentiments seem to portray people who receive welfare benefits as 'useless', he has taken up the view that welfare benefits demotivate sections of working-class people from obtaining gainful employment. He self-positions as a successful member of society who do not rely on handouts from the government and distances himself from working class groups that he viewed to be undeserving of support from public funds. In a sense, he has reproduced the discourse about a specific set of people on welfare benefits who are perceived to be lazy, choosy about the available jobs on offer and unmotivated to help themselves. This discourse positions the 'lower' classes as people who made a choice to break with long-established values about one's role in the relations of economic production (one should work hard and pay taxes) and the relations of social reproduction (one should marry and raise disciplined and well-socialized children) (Murray 2001). One possible explanation for this observation could be due to Mohamed's middle-class trajectory which I have highlighted in chapter 4. Although he resides in a socially deprived locality, Mohamed distances himself from its working-class residents. However, his view is not indicative of all adult SLS as the following episode shows how the topic of welfare benefits was debated by Mohamed and Axmaadeey.

Episode 11

This episode shows an example of the opposing positions on the topic of welfare benefits between Mohamed and Axmaadeey. It shows how the topic of social welfare might be shaped by individual lived experiences.

Setting: This episode emerged from a casual conversational interview with Axmaadeey and Mohamed at a restaurant near the Whitechapel mosque. The encounter took place after my informants had observed Friday afternoon prayers. The restaurant was very busy during this encounter and whilst we waited for our kebabs to be served, the topic of undeserving welfare recipients was initiated by Mohamed as he related some of his experiences at work:

1. Axmaadeey: I don't agree with you sir (looking at Mohamed). If it wasn't because of the benefit system I wouldn't be talking to you now.
2. Mohamed: But you don't understand Axmaadeey, I had to write their CVs and they wouldn't even get up for the interviews! I even called prospective employers for them! And this problem is not only about immigrants, even the working-class whites are the same, they go to the job centre and make calls in order to be turned down.
3. Axmaadeey: Perhaps, but look at me, I went through the system and now I'm out of the system. It helped me to start my life here, I pay my share of income tax now, I'm a good citizen, I obey the laws.
4. Mohamed: You are an exception to the rule, Mr Axmaadeey. I have never taken benefits and I think it is bad even for the Somali community. It makes them lazy.
5. Axmaadeey: I disagree, there are others like me and if you don't give people a chance, you'll never know what the outcome is. (Conversational interview 12/04/14)

The exchanges above show how Axmaadeey and Mohamed have taken opposing positions on the topic of welfare benefits. In turn 2, Mohamed communicated his belief that the problem with unemployment is a class issue as he stressed that the problem crosses racial and ethnic boundaries as he included people of Somali descent as well as members of the white working classes in his assessment of the welfare system. However, as a former asylum seeker and recipient of welfare benefits, Axmaadeey contested Mohamed's view. Axmaadeey believe that the welfare system has provided the opportunity for him to do well in the UK. However, Mohamed emphasised that his

position on this topic developed from his experiences of working with the unemployed and he distanced himself by deploying the personal pronoun ‘they’ in his reference to Somalis who receive welfare benefits. To an extent, Axmaadeey and Mohamed appears to have appropriated the opposing ideologies of the Labour and Conservative parties in Britain. The exchanges above bear remarkable resemblance to the below House of Commons debate about welfare cuts between the Conservative Department of Works and Pensions Minister Mr Iain Duncan Smith and Mr Byrne, a Labour party politician:

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Mr Iain Duncan Smith) This Government inherited from the previous Government an unsustainable and costly system, and a welfare state that I believe delivered poor social outcomes, trapping people in dependency, as well as a poor deal for Britain’s taxpayers.

Mr Byrne: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for giving way again: he is being typically generous. No doubt he, like me, will have looked at the DWP benefit expenditure tables, which show that spending on out-of-work benefits between 1996-97 and 2009-10 did not rise, but fell by £7.5 billion. That is why Lord Freud said that Labour’s record in getting people back to work was “remarkable” and noted that Labour had tackled the long-term dependency on unemployment benefits that it had inherited from the Tories in 1997.

(Available at

<https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm130108/debtext/130108-0002.htm#13010834000002>)

Even though chapter 4 has highlighted the relatively privileged backgrounds of Axmaadeey and Mohamed, the exchanges above show how lived experiences shaped adult SLS’ views on the question of social welfare. As a former recipient of social welfare and embedded resident of South London, Axmaadeey empathises with the people who need income support. He is aligned with the Labour party’s idea that people needed ‘out of work benefits’ to get back to work.

In short, subsection 7.3.1 has shown how an aspect of Somali ethnicities may be understood as a result of the lived experiences of individual Somalis in the UK. It argued that there isn’t a universal nature of Somali ethnicities as while both of my informants are of relatively middle-class backgrounds who maintain diasporic ties to Somaliland (see chapter 4), their social self-positionings as regards the question of social welfare were conditioned by their lived experiences in the UK. The following subsection shows how some of my young SLS informants small accounts of their lived experiences position themselves in relation to the established cultural practice of fighting in South London.

7.3.2 Local transgressive practices 2: Fighting and the rites of passage for South London youth

South London is reputed to be a ‘tough’ neighbourhood and being able to fight is valued by the residents of this area (Evans 2003). As embedded residents of South London, the following episodes show how some aspects of my young informants’ social identities were marked by their references to the cultural habit of fighting. In a way, young SLS cannot escape the fact that they live in a socially deprived area with certain ingrained practices.

Episode 12

This episode reveals my informants’ accounts of witnessing the transgressive and habitual practice of fighting in South Docks. These accounts suggest that fighting is a routine practice among certain residents of the area in which my informants live their everyday lives.

Setting: In this episode of classroom talk, I instructed my informants to write an essay to describe the experiences of attending their local schools. According to Safiyo, one of the regular occurrences that she witnessed is the transgressive practice of fighting between students of different schools in South London.

1. Safiyo: And in South Docks, these kids from different schools gather where they can fight.
2. Steve: So if boys from different schools in South Docks meet up there might be a fight?
3. Safiyo: And girls as well.
4. Steve: And girls as well?
5. Abuubakar: One time I went to South Docks, after school, I went to South Docks for the first time after school. In that, maybe around the Comfort Inn? I went out, that’s the first time I went there after school in a long time. When I went there all I saw is trouble. There was a woman and a man fighting. Terrible fight. Punching and everything, and I thought, “Welcome to South Docks.”
6. Asad: The girls start the fights.

7. Daud: So, I saw, I was in Burgess Park, yeah? And I just saw some Harris girls and there were some boys, and these girls were fighting with the boys and then after, the girls were chasing off the boys. The boys were running.
 8. Steve: Really?
 9. Daud: Yeah. In the park. They wanted to fight, the girls were trying to fight, but the boys didn't want to fight so they ran away. And the police came to the park. And they kicked everyone out of the park, every secondary school child out of the park.
 10. Asad: That's dumb.
- (Classroom recording 08/03/14)

The accounts of my informants' lived experiences suggest that fighting is an ingrained practice among many young people in South Docks. Safiyo in turn 1 claimed that one of the routine practices in South Docks centres on battles between students from different schools in the area. Safiyo also claimed that this practice is not gender specific as she has observed girls' involvement in fights which both Asad and Daud agreed (turns 6 and 7). The discussion above mirrors some of Evans's (2003) findings where she discovered fighting to be an embedded practice among her female informants to build and maintain their reputations. In this episode, my informants distanced themselves from the traditional local cultural practice of fighting by using the personal pronoun 'they' to describe the people who indulge in these transgressive practices. However, as the following episode suggests, some aspects of my informants' self-positionings were shaped by the fact that they live in a locality with a history of fighting as a rite of passage among its residents.

Episode 13

This episode shows how Somali ethnicities might be shaped by one of the ingrained norms of the locality. It suggests that some of my young informants' lived experiences included fighting as a rite of passage in South London.

Setting: Conversational interview with Abuubakar at the research site. During the conversation, Abuubakar claimed that he was constantly challenged to fight in his neighbourhood:

People are like, they're always fighting in my area and they just like to fight They just like to fight, they'll just come to you 'Eh what's...what's your problem?' And you just have to deliver. So whenever I see a person like they don't trouble me now no one trouble me
(Conversational interview 02/05/14)

Abuubakar's words above communicated his identity as a 'tough' South Londoner. His account suggests that fighting is a rite of passage for young people in his area and that Abuubakar was not immune from this particular local practice, he had to produce the image of a tough person by fighting to maintain prestige in his neighbourhood. His account also reflects Evans's (2003) observation that competition amongst Bermondsey boys revolve around 'being tough, able to fight and do battle, embody damage and maintain prestige' (Evans 2003: 212). Subsection 7.3.2 suggested that fighting is an embedded cultural practice in the South London space and although the socio demographics of this locale has changed, new arrivals are compelled to observe this tradition. As a resident in a 'tough' neighbourhood, Abuubakar was not impervious to the ingrained norm of fighting in South London. In short, this subsection has shown how a part of Somali ethnicities has been inflected by the embedded cultural dispositions and practices of some of South London's residents.

7.3.3 Local transgressive practices 3: the consumption of cannabis

This subsection shows how an aspect of South London Somali ethnicities should be understood in relation to their self-positionings with regard to local cultural habits. In this episode, my informants' accounts reveal that smoking marijuana is one of the ingrained cultural habits among most of their peers in school and among certain neighbours at South Docks.

Episode 14

The following episode shows how aspects of my informants' social identities were inflected by their immersion in South London social realms which included the embedded cultural practice of smoking marijuana among its residents.

Setting: In this episode of classroom talk, I instructed my informants to write a persuasive essay to advise a young person against succumbing to pressure from her peers to smoke cigarettes. After a few minutes of silence, Asad introduced the topic of marijuana consumption in his response to Safiyo's comment.

1. Safiyo: If she doesn't like what she... what they're doing, why is she bothering with them?
2. Steve: Hmm. OK.
3. Asad: She doesn't bun with them
4. Steve: She doesn't bun with them? What's a "bun"?
5. Safiyo: Bun. (Chuckles.)
6. Asad: Uh –
7. Steve: Hang out?
8. Asad: No. It means people sit around, get a zoot⁵⁶ and just do whatever.
9. Steve: A zoot.
10. Asad: It's that weed, like a rolled up one. Cannabis, marijuana, whatever you...
11. Safiyo: But I didn't say that.
12. Nasra: She said "bothering with them."
13. Abuubakar: Yeah. People will do that in my school, you know.
14. Asad: They do.
15. Abuubakar: They think it's fun. Like, yeah, I'm going to get high tonight. Well, it's not fun. Some people get this stink on them.
16. Asad: You actually can get, like, this stench.
17. Steve: Are they your age?
18. Abuubakar: Yeah? If they're selling drugs, they stink. [Classroom recording 19/04/14]

During the exchanges above, Safiyo in turn 1 questioned the fictional teenager's choice to continue her friendship with her peers even though she did not agree with some of their practices such as smoking cigarettes. Asad in turn 3 diverted the topic of discussion to introduce the topic of the social practice of smoking marijuana or '*bunning*'. Derived from the word 'burn', 'bun' is a term that originated from London's Jamaican residents (Peckham 2007: 41). In turn 8, Asad explains that this term refers to a group of people that '*sit around, get a zoot and do whatever*'. The consumption of cannabis appears to be commonplace in South Docks as reflected in turns 3 and 4, both Abuubakar and Asad concur that it is a practice that many of their peers in school partake in. Young SLS distance themselves from this practice by using the personal pronoun 'they' in reference to the people who partake in the practice. Further, while my informants did not specifically affix this practice on a specific ethnic grouping, the use of the personal

⁵⁶ Marijuana cigarette (Thorne 2007)

pronoun ‘they’ alluded to their African Caribbean peers because the consumption of marijuana in the locale was historically associated with ‘black, specifically Jamaican men’ (Evans 2003: 226). What this episode has demonstrated is a way in which an aspect of young SLS ethnicities was marked by local ingrained norms. While they claim to distance themselves from consuming marijuana, young SLS were attuned to this local habit and they used a local term to describe the practice of communal marijuana consumption. Aspects of young SLS ethnicities in this light, was inflected by local cultural practices that were established by its African Caribbean residents.

Section 7.3 summary

This section has provided a view of SLS’ social self-positionings in relation to the local ingrained norms of receiving social welfare benefits, fighting and the consumption of marijuana. In 7.3.1, I have shown how my adult informants’ views on the topic of social welfare have been contoured by the political ideologies of the Conservative and Labour parties in the UK. My informants’ accounts of their lived experiences also suggest that fighting continues to be an embedded cultural practice and rite of passage for young people in South London. New arrivals to the locality have been conditioned to continue the cultural practice of fighting after the original inhabitants have moved elsewhere. Somehow, the residents of this locality have preserved the traditional practice of fighting. My informants were also attuned to the semantics of marijuana consumption that was originally associated with people of Jamaican descent. Although young SLS distance themselves from the habit of marijuana consumption, they were nevertheless deeply embedded in an area whose inhabitants maintain this practice. In short, section 7.3 has shown how aspects of the nature of SLS ethnicities were inflected by the everyday negotiations of local ethnic differences and the dispositions and cultural practices of certain groups of working-class residents in Southeast London.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that aspects of my informants’ unfolding Somali ethnicities in superdiversity must be understood in part, as the resultant effects of mundane everyday

chafing with diverse groups of people living in Southwark. First, my informants' experiences of local liveability (Amin 2002) show how the terms of engagement for negotiating ethnic differences were structured by the history and historical narratives of race and colour in South London. By taking the effects of local liveability into account, I have shown how my informants at times, faced the problem of misrecognition and exclusion from certain black and African identities. Second, this chapter has also shown examples of how local historical racist discourses were unconsciously invoked by young SLS in their assessments of certain black and white residents in the area. Third, I have revealed how my informants' South London identities were indexed by their awareness of the relationship between urban spaces, ethnicities, social classes and ingrained local practices. Further, young SLS were attuned to the racist ideology of certain white working-class residents in specific areas in Southwark and were aware of the symbolisms associated with a section of the supporters of their local football club. Finally, this chapter reveals how my informants positioned themselves with regard to local residents' ingrained norms of reliance on welfare benefits, cultural habits of fighting and consumption of marijuana. To sum up, I have shown that a part of South London Somali ethnicities is shaped by the fact that my informants live in a socially deprived locality. Their immersion in a range of social realms in South London have conditioned my informants' social self-positionings in relation to a range of local narratives of ethnic differences and embedded cultural habits. In short, my informants' accounts of their lived experiences in this chapter have made the case for an investigation of 'place' and history of the place in the study of superdiverse Somali ethnicities. It has shown how a departure from a search for intrinsic features of Somaliness to a focus on the experiences of prosaic micropolitics of everyday encounter with the diverse groups of people in specific localities could reveal aspects of emergent social formation of Somali identities in contemporary UK. In short, this chapter has argued that aspects of Somali ethnicities in superdiversity are intertwined with local specificities.

Chapter 8: Conclusions

Introduction

Drawing on the cross-disciplinary perspectives of cultural, anthropological, sociological and sociolinguistic studies, this thesis has been written with the aim to develop a more precise understanding of what Somali ethnicities might mean in a modern, superdiverse urban context in the UK. This final chapter revisits this central question and pulls together the key themes emerging from the data analysis. By abstaining from focusing on the spectacular, this thesis has offered an account of the ways that Somali ethnicities might be understood from a narrow focus on ten people of Somali descent (three adults and seven young people) at a local community centre in South London. By collecting data consisting of observational field notes, recordings of naturally occurring speech and individual casual conversational interviews, this thesis elicited my informants' self-declared ethnic positionings and recorded their observed practices at the site. The database enabled a discussion and analysis of the relationship between the narratives of 'authenticated' Somali ethnicities, communicative habits and the negotiation of embedded discourses of race specific to this locality in the social formation of Somali identities. By developing an ethnographically grounded approach to the collection and interpretation of the data, this research study has addressed the following research questions:

1. What view of social self-positionings emerge from SLS' observed cultural practices and routine talk at my research site?
2. How do SLS position themselves in relation to social class differences, traditional cultural practices of clan affiliation, religious allegiance to Islam and gender relations from small accounts of their lived experiences?

Chapters 4 to 6 have addressed my research questions pertaining to ethnic and religious affiliations by arguing for the importance of analysing a mosaic of intersecting discourses and practices that marked my informants as 'Somalis' in a particular location. It has shown how as a group, SLS exhibited unpredictable and fluid identifications with the narratives and moral stories of what my informants construe to be an authentic and universal Somali ethnicity. More crucially, Chapters 3 and 7 has shown that a part of the nature of SLS ethnicities in superdiversity is marked by the history and specificities of the locality as constituted by the narratives of race and ingrained cultural habits of its

residents. By rejecting ethnic absolutist (Gilroy 1993b) conceptualisations of ethnicities, this study provides a view of the formation of emergent superdiverse Somali ethnicities at a specific location. By closely focusing on the observed practices and discourses of my key informants, this thesis has offered a view of the unpredictable nature of Somali ethnicities that have not been previously shown in the UK research literature. This final chapter is organised around two themes; I firstly summarize the key points of the preceding chapters to remind the reader of this thesis' emerging themes. Second, I show how my study contributes to the research literature on UK Somalis and to debates on superdiverse urban ethnicities. I finally conclude by discussing some of the possible implications of this study on policy and on theorizations of ethnicities in urban contexts.

8.1 A recapitulation of chapters 1 to 7

In chapter 1, I reviewed a range of relevant UK Somali research literature. Apart from some notable exceptions, this body of work, as evaluated in chapter one, has in the main essentialised Somalis in the UK as an insular, bounded group who are straightforwardly linked with a deeply rooted attachment to Somali customs and cultural practices of (i) clan affiliation (Griffiths 2002, Hopkins 2006, Harris 2004), (ii) Muslim religiosity (Harris 2004, Change Institute 2009) and (iii) the practice of 'traditional' gender relations (Harding et al 2007, Phillips-Mundy 2013, Atubo & Batterbury 2001). Somalis in the UK have also been mostly portrayed as a 'problem' ethnic group that are marked by their chronic inability to obtain gainful employment (Change 2007, Jordan 2001), suffer from severe and disabling inter-generational differences (Harding et al 2007) and problems with education attainment (Demie et al 2007). I have also argued that these portrayals do not match my experiences of engagement with a small group of Somalis in London. Given these limitations in the UK research literature, I argued that a nuanced account of the formation of Somali ethnicities requires a theoretical perspective founded on the concept of superdiversity supplemented with an anti-essentialist conceptualisation of ethnicities.

Chapter 2 situated the methodological stance adopted in the thesis and provided a description and justification for the research procedures undertaken in its development. In order to gain an understanding of how SLS experience and make sense of aspects of

their social and cultural worlds, this study involved a specific focus on a small group of key informants. To gain insights into some of the ways my informants identify with a range of social categories, my research informants' self-declarations and their conscious and unconscious communicative habits were observed, recorded and analysed. I have also shown why a systematic analysis of the research informants' social identifications required the ethnography of speaking framework as a format to discuss and interpret their self-positionings within a range of categories. I have also pointed out that heretofore, Somalis in the UK have not been studied in this way.

Chapter 3 provided the foundation for my argument that Somalis do not exist as a bounded group who are impervious to the effects of living among superdiverse residents in a modern, urban context. It has shown how local conditions in Southwark, the borough in which my research site is located, is an area that is strongly marked by the specificities of its historical and contemporary social setting. An area that has been traditionally associated with the poor white working classes, South Docks has gone through processes of change with regard to the social demographics of its residents. This chapter has also shown how an analysis of some of the public signs that were emplaced in this locality provided indexical information about the cultural practices and social class orientations of its residents. I have shown how the large number of shops that caters to the needs of the area's African Caribbean and West African residents reflects the demographics of this locality. As Somalis constitute only 1% of the area's residents, there was a distinct lack of visible presence of Somali owned businesses apart from the single 'Dahabshiil' shop that I noted during my period of fieldwork. This chapter has also provided an example of a token act of public civility which might have resulted from the habitual rubbing together of diverse cultures in this locality. However, my data have also suggested that acts of civility in public spaces might obscure the private prejudiced views of people towards other people of certain ethnicities. Crucially, chapter 3 has also argued that the general perception of Somalis as belonging to a bounded and insular group was partly created by local council policy. In short, this chapter has charted the terrain in which my research site is located. It has provided the basis of this thesis' argument that Somali ethnicities must be understood in relation to the specificities of 'place'.

Chapter four shows that in superdiversity, a part of the nature of Somali ethnicities must be understood in relation to individual biographical trajectories. By tracing my informants' biographical trajectories, I have shown that adult SLS are cosmopolitans who attempt to reproduce certain aspects of Somali cultural practices in a modern, urban context. As a group, SLS do not share similar places of origin and migration history prior to their arrival in the UK but they align with certain ethnic particularities and maintain diasporic connections with Somaliland. These biographical portraits have also shown how my key informants' linguistic and cultural practices have been shaped by the lived experiences during their migratory transits of their travel itineraries. It has shown how my informants align themselves with a specific place of origin in their self-declared stances and descriptions of their linguistic repertoires. It has also revealed that as a group, my informants belong to the middle classes who place great importance on education and they were not hampered by the difficulties that are reported to beset Somalis in the UK. As such, this chapter has shown that it is impossible to presuppose ethnic particularities by reading the label 'Somali' which, by extension, demonstrates the importance of investigating individual biographies in any attempt to understand the nature of superdiverse Somali ethnicities.

Chapter 5 offered examples of how the interrelated discourses and cultural practices of 'authentic' Somali ethnicity connect people who self-identify as Somalis in the diaspora. Although these themes dominate most of the UK Somali research literature, this chapter has shown how an analysis of the observed practices and discourses of my informants provided a less predictable perspective of the nature of Somali ethnicities in a modern context. This chapter revealed how a set of ethnic particularities such as (i) maintaining kinship ties, clan connections and the prominent role of elders, (ii), rituals and discourses that signify religious allegiance to Islam and (iii) gender relations and modes of dress were perceived by my informants to be a universal Somali ethnicity. However, this chapter has also shown how these aspects of 'authentic' Somali ethnicity were not observed in a straightforward manner. Instead, this chapter has shown how an aspect of Somali ethnicities should be understood as my informants' degrees of compliance/non-compliance/part compliance with a set of moral stories and cultural practices construed to be 'traditional' Somali ethnicity. I have also suggested that the accumulation of SLS' lived experiences in multiple social realms might have caused a slight detachment from

a full compliance with a universal, all-encompassing set of ‘authenticated’ Somali cultural practices and narratives. Crucially, this chapter has revealed the multidimensional nature of Somali ethnicities that is somehow constituted by the interaction between the discourses and practices of Somali ‘traditions’ in a modern context. And in the process certain tensions, strains and ambiguities about what might constitute Somali ethnicity, have emerged.

Chapter 6 has shown how a collective SLS identity was indexed by an interpretive analysis of my informants’ communicative behaviour at the research site. These previously un-researched details have revealed some of the ways traditional, unforced deference to members of higher social ranking was bestowed by making the small gestures of respect and by initiating the greeting exchanges. I have also shown that the ability to produce certain greeting forms indicate one’s membership at the site. Although performed in multiple linguistic codes, it is in the ways that greeting and leave taking exchanges were performed that provide indexical information of the interactants’ social relationships at the site. Further, minute but significant indicators of Somali identities were found in my informants’ use of Somali interjections to convey certain emotions. Perhaps as a result of the lack of expertise in Somali language among young SLS, these discourse markers are small but significant indicators of Somali ethnicities at the research site. Further, SLS’ shared Muslim identity were routinely transmitted in the teachers’ Arabic expressive interjections in which Allah was unconsciously invoked to convey a range of emotions. This chapter has argued that a study of the communicative habits of my key informants is required to reveal some of the ways Somali ethnicities may be indexed in a multi ethnic locality. These small but recurring discourse markers in Somali and Arabic languages created a collective conscience of Somali ethnicities in superdiverse South London.

Chapter 7 has argued that emergent Somali ethnicities in superdiversity must be understood in part, as the resultant effects of the micropolitics of local negotiations of ethnicity and ingrained practices that are specific to place. It has shown the effects of everyday chafing between superdiverse ethnic groups by paying close attention to SLS’ accounts of their negotiations of ethnic differences with their peers in South London. I

have shown how the history of race and colour specific to the place and the lack of an established visible presence created problems of misrecognition of Somalis and their exclusion from certain black and African identities in South London. I have also shown how a set of historical racist discourses of ethnic differences originally deployed by Southwark's white working-class residents who have mostly left the area continue to be circulated by the area's multi ethnic residents in the present. This chapter has also shown how my informants were marked as South Londoners by their references of the relationship between local urban spaces, ethnicities, social classes and ingrained local cultural practices. Finally, my informants' social self-positionings in relation to the local ingrained norms of reliance on welfare benefits, fighting and the consumption of marijuana show how they distance themselves from working class practices specific to South London. In short, I have shown the how living in a socially deprived area with its particular history and traditions impact on aspects of my informants' Somali ethnicities. To sum up, my informants' accounts of their lived experiences of negotiating narratives of race and colour in this chapter has made the case for an investigation of 'place' and history of the place in any study of urban ethnicities.

Following on from the recapitulation of the chapters in this thesis, the upcoming section provides this study's key claims emerging from my findings as outlined in section 8.1.

8.2 Key claims of this thesis

The summary of the chapters above has illustrated why it is necessary to develop ethnographic insights to gain purchase on a view of the nature of urban Somali ethnicities in superdiversity. This thesis has shown how a close study of the actual practices, self-declared stances and communicative behaviour among a small group of people who accept the label 'Somali' over a period of 18 months is able to reveal previously unseen perspectives of situated and emergent Somali ethnicities. By showing the reader the unfolding social formation of Somali ethnicities in an urban context, this thesis has broken new ground in the UK Somali research literature.

My study also contributes to the research literature on superdiverse urban ethnicities by showing how ethnicities should be understood in contemporary times. In the case of Somalis in South London, certain aspects of ethnic particularities must be understood in part, as the resultant combinations of (i) individual biographical trajectories and (ii)

specificities of their place of residence. With regard to point (i), a careful study of my informants' individual biographical trajectories and their varying linguistic resources revealed traces of their immersion in diverse social realms including the variables of place of origin, migratory transits, social class backgrounds and self-declared alignment with certain ethnic particularities derived from Somaliland. The combination of these diverse variables among a putatively homogenous small group of people with diasporic connections with Somaliland is, according to Vertovec (2007), a key feature of superdiversity. As such, this thesis argues for a textured account of Somali ethnicities as while my key research informants self-identify as Somalis, they actually align with certain linguistic and cultural practices of a specific area in Somaliland. This key factor has been mostly ignored by the UK research literature, which this thesis has shown, and constitutes an important aspect of the nature of Somali ethnicities. This thesis has also shown why an analysis of individual biographical trajectories is crucial in any investigation of the ethnic alignments of groups of people who claim certain ethnic labels in superdiverse times.

Second, with regard to (ii), this thesis has shown why it is of crucial importance to gain a proper understanding of place in any study of urban ethnicities. This endeavour entails an investigation of the particularities of the research context comprising of the history of the area and historical and contemporary social demographics of the area. As this thesis has shown, the abovementioned features of place matter in quite crucial ways in my informants' everyday experiences of socializing, studying and working with multi ethnic local residents and by extension, on the social formation of contemporary Somali ethnicities. By taking these factors into account, my thesis has also accepted Vertovec's (2007) invitation to investigate how local specificities might affect banal interactions between members of diverse ethnic groups. While Wessendorf's (2013) work in Hackney provided useful insights into the effects of habitual intermingling among members of different ethnic groups, my study contributes to this strand of research on superdiversity with a focus on a small group of Somalis in Southwark. My study also contributes to the debate on the nature of superdiverse urban ethnicities by revealing how an embedded set of intersecting local discourses of race, skin colour, religion and ethnicity were deployed to construe social identities in Southwark. In the main, most research studies on new superdiverse social formations tend to claim routine interactions among diverse ethnic groups might mediate potential tensions emerging from ethnic or racial differences, leading to 'the development of convivial and cosmopolitan identities' (Taylor-Gooby and

Waite 2014, 272). In contrast, my findings show how repeated interactions between my informants and their multi-ethnic peers did not produce a blurring of ethnic distinctions or a laissez faire system in the distribution of social identities. In fact, my study adds to the research literature on superdiverse urban ethnicities by revealing how historical racist narratives and discourses of phenotypic distinctions specific to place matter in important ways. In other words, historically established stereotypes founded on phenotypic traits and racist discourses about certain ethnic groups in Southwark were not undermined by the banal everyday chafing between people of diverse ethnicities. Instead, SLS' accounts of contact with other residents in Southwark somewhat echo Wessendorf's (2013, 2016) argument that racial and social class tensions emerge from what she calls 'commonplace diversity'. My study adds to Wessendorf's insights by providing a nuanced account of how racial and class tensions unfold from my research informants' experiences of interacting with diverse ethnic groups in South London. My study has also shown how urban ethnicities are constituted by my informants' experiences in certain urban spaces and how contact with established residents of Southwark produce new hierarchical social positions within the black social category.

Subsequently, as my study focused on the constitution of Somali ethnicities in a modern South London context, this study has also contributed to a strand of ethnographic research literature on urban ethnicities (Hewitt 1986, Back 1996, Harris 2006, Harris and Rampton 2009). I have also shown why it is necessary to draw on anti-essentialist conceptualisations of ethnicities proposed by Hall and Gilroy to provide a more precisely illustrated view of the unpredictable nature of Somali ethnicities in superdiversity. The revelations outlined above serve to bolster my argument that it is inherently problematic to view Somalis as a bounded group of people who exist as an island unaffected by the effects of interactions with their multi ethnic peers and neighbours in a range of public spaces.

My thesis has also shown how an understanding of Somali ethnic affiliations might be developed by a close analysis of the communicative habits of my research informants. It has shown how minute, recurring discourse markers that emerge from my informants' ritualised communicative behaviour created a collective conscience of Somali identity in a superdiverse arena. Finally, my thesis expands the research literature on UK Somalis by revealing how aspects of Somali ethnicities should be understood as the compliance,

part compliance and non-compliance with a set of narratives which my informants construe to be authentic or ‘traditional’ Somali ethnicity. In contrast with most of the UK Somali research literature that portrays Somalis as a putatively homogenous group of people entrenched in practices seen to be incompatible with life in the UK or that young Somalis reject their cultural heritage, I have shown the diverse variations in alignments with a range of ethnic particularities among my informants.

In a sense, the preceding claims demonstrated the efficacy of this thesis’ research design. The insights into the nature of SLS ethnicities in this study were illustrated by a combination of research instruments consisting of observational field notes, classroom recordings, self-recordings of my informants’ naturally occurring talk and conversational and retrospective interviews. My study argues that researching the nature of ethnicities in superdiversity requires the following: (i) ethnographic descriptions of the settings informed by the ethnography of speaking framework and (ii), an interpretation of the informants’ discourses and the enactment of routine practices at a specific location. Having summarised my thesis’ key claims, I now turn to some of the possible implications that the insights gained might have for policy makers and for theorizations of ethnicities in contemporary times.

8.3 Implications for policy and theorizations of ethnicities in superdiversity

This section addresses the question of the possible implications of this study on an understanding of the nature of Somali ethnicities in superdiversity for policy and policy makers. Second, it explores the possible implications of this study on theorizations of ethnicities in superdiversity.

8.3.1 Possible implications for policy and policy makers

Topics such as community cohesion and community engagement have been discussed by successive governments in the UK (Blake et al 2008, Change Institute 2009, Rhamie, Bhopal and Bhatti 2010). Ethnic minority groups that pledge allegiance to Islam are ‘under public and government scrutiny’ (Change Institute 2009: 20) in the light of

contemporary global security concerns. As a group that is perceived to be rigidly attached to the teachings and practices of Islam, the Somali community was one of the groups targeted by the ‘Understanding Muslim Communities’ project commissioned by the Cohesion Directorate of Department of Communities and Local Governments. The project was initiated to identify how the government ‘could best engage and work in partnership with specific communities’ (Change Institute 2009: 5). My thesis, which sheds some light on the nature of SLS’ self-declarations and practices of Islam should be seen as a critique of the problematization of Muslim subjects in contemporary public debates and the ways it has shaped policies. Debates around the topic of the demise of multiculturalism have linked Muslims with a deterministic view of Islam with a simplistic understanding of certain Muslim rituals as indicators of ‘difference’. This view has also constructed a view of Islam as being incompatible with British values (Change Institute 2009). The threat of radicalisation has also made the UK government focus its funding resources to promote social cohesion and one of these initiatives is the Prevent Violent Extremism (PVE) programme. This programme is framed by an ongoing commitment to community safety and cohesion and prioritised ‘engaging the Muslim community/ies in the borough, understanding their needs, building a strong network of Muslim organisations working in partnership with local agencies through a dialogical community development approach’ (Rooke and Slater 2010: 5). However, Kundani (2009) reports how some “local authorities have been pressured to accept Prevent funding in direct proportion to the numbers of Muslims in their area – in effect, constructing the Muslim population as a ‘suspect community’ (Kundani 2009: 6). For example, the local delivery of Southwark’s Prevent programme aimed to support ‘Muslim communities in their desire to reject violent extremist ideologies’ (Rooke and Slater 2010: 5) by reaching out to young Muslims including young Somali people who were deemed at risk of radicalisation or extremism with the aim of finding alternative ways of engagement. This intense focus on religious extremism however, had caused the authorities to neglect wider social challenges and had isolated many members of the Muslim community (Imogen and Slater 2010). As argued by Thomas, “the government’s ‘hearts and minds’ response to the threat of domestic Islamist terrorism within the wider CONTEST⁵⁷ strategy, has been exposed as both failed and friendless by growing political and academic scrutiny”

⁵⁷ CONTEST: counter -terrorism strategy. Is the work that is undertaking by ‘the Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism, in the Home Office, works to counter the threat from terrorism. Their work is covered in the government’s counter-terrorism strategy’

(Thomas 2010: 442). My work challenges essentialised understandings of Muslim allegiances and culture as one of the key themes emerging from my data is the unpredictable and variable nature of my informants' religious allegiance to Islam.

Second, I have also shown that a more sophisticated understanding of Somalis in the UK required a departure from the fixed and reductive pre-migration narratives and historical social practices. These views, as I have maintained throughout this thesis, runs the risk of essentialising a set of cultural particularities to be indicative of all UK Somalis and increases the polarisation of Somalis from other ethnic groupings in the UK. Current welfare models and social provision were designed for another era and monitoring of need and outcome is still based on communities that are imagined as fixed and largely homogeneous. As I have shown in chapter 3, multicultural policies that were implemented to encourage community initiatives within Somali communities have unwittingly contributed to community cleavage rather than community cohesion. Having discussed the possible implications that this thesis might have for policy makers, the following subsection turns to how some of the findings might have implications for the theorizations of ethnicities in superdiversity.

8.3.2 Implications for theorizations of ethnicities in contemporary times

Having summarised the implications that this thesis' may hold for policy makers, this section considers how ethnicities should be conceptualised in contemporary conditions. In the first, cultural aspects of particular ethnic groups should not be seen as a set of 'traditions' that is unchanged, handed down from previous generations and reproduced in its original configurations but rather, as the enactment of routine social practices in the present. As my findings have shown, certain 'traditional' practices that were construed to be emblematic of Somali culture provided a prefabricated social and cultural identification for my informants. This selected set of ethnic particularities which has been highlighted by the UK Somali research literature could be seen in terms of what Raymond Williams (1977) refer to as 'selective tradition':

an intentionally selected version of a shaping past and a pre-shaped present, which is then powerfully operative in the process of social and cultural definition and identification (Williams 1977: 115).

Williams' thoughts above is especially useful in my attempt to understand why my informants routinely circulate a set of narratives and moral stories which to an extent, suggest that there such a thing as ONE Somali ethnicity. My informants' frequent telling of moral stories- that include their self-proclaimed unyielding attachments to the homeland, compliance with certain religious rituals and cultural practices- were constructed to represent an all encompassing authentic and 'traditional' Somali ethnicity. In a sense, the forces of 'selective tradition' has effected a specific and internalized 'conditioning' of SLS' self-declarations of aspects of Somali ethnicities. However, a more lucid view of 'doing' Somali 'traditions' in superdiversity, which this thesis has provided, suggests that contemporary Somali ethnicities are forged in localised areas. As Hewitt (1991) argues, an understanding of culture should not be limited to what is known simply as "'tradition' but rather, as the bricoleur's bag, [in which] meaning [is] created as much as given" (Hewitt 1991: 15). Following Hewitt's (1991) emphasis on the manifestation of new cultures, in sum the remaking of tradition, this thesis has undermined the notion that Somali ethnic identities are primordial in nature (Lewis 1994, Luling 2006). As this thesis has shown in an empirically grounded way, Somali ethnicities should be viewed in the cultures of hybridity framework as postulated by Hall (1992). As chapters 5 to 7 have shown, the everyday practices and telling of moral stories among my informants are a combination of the 'traditional' practices that are marked 'Somali', 'traditional' practices that morph into modern Somali marked together with practices that are forged in South London as a resultant effect of living in a superdiverse locality. As such, this thesis has shown there really is no absolute version of Somali ethnicity but instead, emergent social identities deriving from traces of Somali cultural practices configured with aspects of British identities structured by the locality. I would argue that the strength of the analytical and theoretical framework deployed in this study is its close attention to some of the factors that operate on the 'micro' level such as the local norms, social class orientations, linguistic repertoires that were embodied in the cultural practices of my informants. In this light, identity labels such as 'Somali' or 'Muslim' provide little more than a point of departure. As Said (1993) articulates, identity labels merely serve as points of departure

which if followed into actual experience for only a moment are quickly left behind. Imperialism consolidated the mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale. But its

worst and most paradoxical gift was to allow people to believe that they were only, mainly, exclusively, white, or Black, or Western or Oriental. (Said 1993: 408).

Throughout this thesis, I have shown that it is problematic to reduce my key informants' identities to 'black', 'Somali', 'Muslim' or 'British' or their particular 'clan'. In fact, the cumulative effects of SLS' migratory trajectories and lived experiences in the UK shows the processual, ambiguous and contextual nature of Somali ethnicities. Consequently, I also argue that my approach to the study of Somali ethnicities could also be applied to people of other ethnicities in the conditions of superdiversity.

8.4 Some suggestions for future research

I conclude this thesis by considering areas that require further research. I have explicitly stated that my study has focused on a small group of Somalis at a specific South London location who have diasporic connections with Somaliland. As such, the strength of my thesis is also limited by its inability to generalise its findings to be indicative of all Somalis in the UK. However, as I have stated, it is impossible to generalise Somalis in the UK as belonging to a putatively homogenous ethnic group due to individual members' place of origin in Somalia and by extension, their clan affiliation and linguistic repertoires. As such, ethnographic studies to investigate the ethnic particularities of small groups of Somalis with connections to South Somalia, the Puntland, etc. are required to provide a layered view of the diverse nature of Somali ethnicities in the UK.

Second, I have also pointed out that my research informants as a group were relatively affluent. They are not members of the "downtrodden" and in the main, displayed an orientation towards middle class values in the UK. An ethnographic study of working-class members of Somali descent might reveal additional facets of Somali ethnicities to the ones I have presented in this thesis.

Third, I have maintained throughout that this study is focused on a group of Somalis in a specific, socially deprived area with a strong sense of black identities. How might Somali

ethnicities be construed in other areas with different social demographics? For example, how might Somali ethnicities be construed in relation to the history and social demographics of Somerset? Finally, beyond the remit of this thesis, is a proper sociolinguistic analysis of the language practices of groups of Somalis in the UK. An interesting addition to the UK Somali research literature would be an analysis of how social identities emerge from a close study of the linguistic features of small groups of Somalis in specific areas in the UK.

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Appendix: Ethical approval

Stephen Wong
20 Morton Road
London E15 4AN



09 July 2013

Dear Stephen

REP (EM)/12/13-53 'It's tribal innit?' But is it really?: Language use among South London urbanites of Somali descent in superdiversity

Review Outcome: Full Approval

Thank you for sending in the amendments/clarifications requested to the above project. I am pleased to inform you that these meet the requirements of the **Education & Management Research Ethics Panel** and therefore that full approval is now granted subject to the following proviso:

1. Please submit a copy of the gatekeeper letter obtained from the School to the Research Ethics Office.

Please ensure that you follow all relevant guidance as laid out in the King's College London Guidelines on Good Practice in Academic Research (<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/college/policyzone/index.php?id=247>).

For your information ethical approval is granted until **9 July 2016**. If you need approval beyond this point you will need to apply for an extension to approval at least two weeks prior to this explaining why the extension is needed, (please note however that a full re-application will not be necessary unless the protocol has changed). You should also note that if your approval is for one year, you will not be sent a reminder when it is due to lapse.

Ethical approval is required to cover the duration of the research study, up to the conclusion of the research. The conclusion of the research is defined as the final date or event detailed in the study description section of your approved application form (usually the end of data collection when all work with human participants will have been completed), not the completion of data analysis or publication of the results. For projects that only involve the further analysis of pre-existing data, approval must cover any period during which the researcher will be accessing or evaluating individual sensitive and/or un-anonymised records. Note that after the point at which ethical approval for your study is no longer required due to the study being complete (as per the above definitions), you will still need to ensure all research data/records management and storage procedures agreed to as part of your application are adhered to and carried out accordingly.

If you do not start the project within three months of this letter please contact the Research Ethics Office.

Should you wish to make a modification to the project or request an extension to approval you will need approval for this and should follow the guidance relating to modifying approved applications:

<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/innovation/research/support/ethics/applications/modifications.aspx>

The circumstances where modification requests are required include the addition/removal of participant groups, additions/removal/changes to research methods, asking for additional data from participants, extensions to the ethical approval period. Any proposed modifications should only be carried out once full approval for the modification request has been granted.

Any unforeseen ethical problems arising during the course of the project should be reported to the approving committee/panel. In the event of an untoward event or an adverse reaction a full report must be made to the Chair of the approving committee/review panel within one week of the incident.

Please would you also note that we may, for the purposes of audit, contact you from time to time to ascertain the status of your research.

If you have any query about any aspect of this ethical approval, please contact your panel/committee administrator in the first instance (<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/innovation/research/support/ethics/contact.aspx>). We wish you every success with this work.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Cowper
Research Support Assistant

Cc: Dr Roxy Harris